

Scottish Left Review

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OCTOBER 1917

REFLECTING

WHAT CAN WE
LEARN FROM SOME
OLD DEAD RUSSIANS?

ON

REVOLUTION



WE EXAMINE THE IMPACT OF
THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION
ON SCOTLAND

ITS LEGACY
ITS CAUSES
ITS CONSEQUENCES



AND WHAT DOES A
REVOLUTION LOOK LIKE
ANYWAY?

'best re(a)d'

FIGHT ANTI-UNION LAWS



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ASLEF CALLS FOR AN INTEGRATED, PUBLICLY OWNED, ACCOUNTABLE RAILWAY FOR SCOTLAND

(which used to be the SNP's position – before they became the government!)



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Part 1: Red star rising and dead Russians

One hundred years ago, a red star was rising. The spectre haunting Europe that Marx and Engels talked of in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 was about to come true with a vengeance. The October revolution would spark revolutions around Europe, mostly obviously in Italy (1919-1920) and Germany (1918-1923). Soviets (workers' councils) sprung up in Vienna, Limerick and Budapest in these years as well. The October revolution was pretty bloodless. Indeed, more were killed and more damage done re-enacting the storming of the Winter Palace to arrest the Kerensky Provisional Government for Sergei Eisenstein's 1927 filming of the adaptation of John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World* book on the October revolution than happened in October 1917.

The October revolution was to be the only successful revolution where workers took power – even if that success was turned into something quite different by Stalin from the

late 1920s onwards. But it is important to hold on to the fact that for a short period of time, the alternative that many arguments make the case for did exist. It was - and remains - the only successful example of a new, post-capitalist society being made.

To celebrate and commemorate such a momentous event, we have decided to get in early with our contribution. Our cover uses the rather ill-tempered retort of 'what can we learn from dead Russians?' as the hook. So with Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin as the leading examples, John Foster looks at the impact upon Scotland of the October revolution, William Bonnar the roots of the revolution, and Dave Sherry and Pat Kelly look at its achievements and legacy. Meanwhile, Stephen Collins considers a lesser known, dead Russian, Maxim Gorki, with regard to an attempt to make culture reflect the lives of the majority of citizens. This is called social realism and is not to be confused with socialist realism which Stalin

initiated as state policy in 1934.

Inspired by the October revolution, Scotland has made its own small contribution to the socialist creed with the likes of John Maclean, Harry McShane, Mary Barbour, Willie Gallacher, Helen Crawford, Jimmy Maxton and the like. Their ilk grappled with the issues of fomenting revolution in an advanced capitalist economy far before independence became a live issue.

We hope the collections of articles will help facilitate a discussion about what a revolution is, what it would look like today, why do they happen, will it be brought about by a party or a social movement, can it survive in a single country and why revolution is still necessary for not just workers but also for humanity and the planet we inhabit. To discuss those issues inevitably brings one to also discuss what is meant by 'socialism' and 'communism'. Without delving any further, we can say at least there are two distinct types of

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conceptions of socialism – one from above by parliament, and one from below by workers. The former approximates to social democracy, the latter to socialist revolution.

In a strangely ironic sense, the death of Fidel Castro fits well into the theme of this edition on the impact and legacy of the Russian revolution. Guerrilla war, not a working class revolt as per the classic

interpretation of how socialism comes about, brought Fidel Castro to power in 1959. But it was a war against US imperialism and its puppet, Batista. Castro was part of a middle class nationalist resistance and it was a measure of weakness of the Batista regime that Castro's tiny forces were able to bring it down. Reforms were introduced but so was a new authoritarian-inclined state. It was the US blockade that drove Cuba

into the arms of the Soviet Union, with the Cuban Communist Party not established until 1965. Undoubted advances in living standards, education and health care have been made but persecution of minorities existed and a well-to-do state ruling class emerged. Free markets reforms have been introduced under the rule of his brother, Raul.

Part 2: Challenging conditions continue

The New Year has begun as the old one ended – with challenging conditions for the left at the Scottish, British, European and international levels. This edition covers a number of these aspects but most obviously focusses upon the forthcoming local council elections in May. These elections present the SNP with the opportunity to deliver upon the 'one party state' that many have accused it of running – the parts being the Holyrood, Westminster and European parliaments. Glasgow will be a key battleground as the Labour council there continues to attack the conditions of its own workforce. In a series of articles, Dave Watson, Willie Sullivan and Phil McGarry examine a number of the salient issues. Dave Watson shows how councils could rethink local democracy in order to stop the centralisation carried out by Holyrood, Willie Sullivan asks us to re-imagine local government and Phil McGarry develops a set of priorities to tackle immediate challenges. We shall consider further aspects of local government head of the May elections in the next issue.

It seems Brexit has paralysed politics in Britain, with everyone waiting to see what the Tories will do and what kind deal they will seek and be able to get. Post-Brexit politics have become something of a phoney war and a diversion from fighting fights against austerity and neo-liberalism. Although this has been true of Scotland too, Scotland still has its own distinctive trajectory. Amongst these was the SNP Scottish Government's first budget under the new fiscal settlement with Westminster. Did the Scottish Government blink first? It would seem so as there were few found to comment that there would be more genuinely new and increased sums of money for public services and no examples of wealth redistribution or no tax rises for the rich (with the additional rowing back on use of school money from rich areas for poor areas). This led the Poverty Alliance to question why the SNP wants power its will not use and will not use to reduce poverty, with its director, Peter Kelly, saying: 'It is disappointing that the Scottish Government have decided not to make full use of the tax powers at

their disposal'. Just as there was no Brexit bounce for the independence cause, such a budget does little either – unless people can see past the SNP to understand that there is a radical independent form of independence. It remains to be seen if the relaunch of the Scottish Independence Convention this month has a role to play here.

Notwithstanding electoral success in the local elections in May, 2016 may be looked back as the year in which the wheels did really start to fall on the SNP bandwagon. On health, education and transport, the SNP is weak and on Brexit its strategy of saying much but doing very little other than releasing umpteen press releases is beginning to grow a bit wearisome. Its political management and strategy is now being exposed as being unable to paper over its programmatic cracks.

With the re-election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader last year, the British road to socialism remains a serious option. But all, as we know, is not well here in terms of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Documents released by Momentum - the group associated with the campaigns to elect and re-elect Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader - for its National Committee meeting on 3 December 2016 show the conundrum it faces. It has a total of 165,157 members and supporters. Of these, it has 145,865 supporters and 20,736 members. Yet of these only 60,316 are Labour Party members with just 17,555 being both Momentum and Labour Party members. So when the Corbynistas attempt to mobilise against the right within Labour, they are rather less fulsome in numbers and influence than we might have thought they'd be. This might explain why the Corbynistas lost out to the right at the November London Labour Party and Labour National Policy Forum meetings. In other words, they are not present and fighting for the delegate positions to determine policy matters in such forums. Without winning here, the right in the Parliamentary Labour Party will not be isolated and marginalised.

But looked at in another way, the low level

of Momentum supporters who are also Labour members suggests two things. The first is that the level of support for Corbyn is not as deep seated as it might at first seem. Thus, those that are Momentum supporters are likely to be largely comprised of those that were registered Labour supporters (so potentially allowing a vote in the election to re-elect Corbyn but nothing more in terms of participating within Labour). Whilst it would be inappropriate to suggest that they are merely 'armchair socialists' or 'clicktivists', because they may well be involved in many actual, physical campaigns and activities, it is probably the case that they do not see the Labour Party as the beginning and end of their political activities. There are equal numbers of pros and cons to this perspective.

The second is that the Labour Party may not constitute the most inviting environment in which to play out their politics. Rules and regulations established by existing members and regimes condition the parameters of what can be done. It may be much easier to remain active within the forums and milieus in which they already are. All this means that the Corbynistas will be compelled to play the long game – not just in terms of the next election being in 2020 unless the numbers in parliament allow for the calling of a snap election by overturning the fixed term for parliaments, but also in terms of the gradually gaining supremacy within the Labour Party. This issue by far outshadows Dugdale's promotion of a federal system, essentially further devolution including employment law, for post-Brexit Britain because it is not a confederal conception.

One final back to Brexit comment – the forthcoming general secretaryship election in the Unite union will hopefully kick start a much needed, productive debate on the free movement of labour within Europe because globalisation is often being confused with internationalism. Free movement has benefitted capital far more than labour so what is the alternative in order that the hand of labour can be strengthened?

So what does revolution look like?

William Bonnar examines what happened in revolutionary Russia

What is the central objective of a revolution? To carry out its programme? To transform society? No. Its central objective is survival. History is littered with examples of revolutions which did not survive to carry through its programme or transform society. It is usually a history written in blood and despair. The greatest triumph of the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 was that, despite colossal obstacles, it did in fact survive.

When the Bolsheviks launched the revolution, they did so on the basis of four assumptions - every one of which quickly unravelled and was proved wrong. The first was that the revolution would bring an end to the war given that the horrendous Russian experience of conflict was a driving force in the revolution. In fact, for Russia the end of the Great War flowed into a barbaric civil war fuelled by massive outside intervention - a war which killed millions through conflict and famine. The second was that the economic collapse which had engulfed Russia would be halted. In fact, it accelerated. In the period immediately after the revolution, Russia had no functioning economy. The third was that the collapsing Tsarist state would be quickly replaced with a new form of radical democracy based on the system of soviets. But this noble ideal quickly disintegrated in the face of

war, famine and economic collapse requiring the Bolsheviks to govern through a ruthless dictatorship. Finally, the Bolsheviks believed that revolution in Russia could only be sustained by an international revolution. Their great fear was that the Revolution would perish if left isolated. While a revolutionary movement did sweep through Europe, by the summer of 1918 it had largely dissipated leaving the Russian Revolution in the state of isolation the Bolsheviks so feared.

Given the above, what where the Bolsheviks meant to do? Give up? Of course, not. They needed to survive and do everything necessary to ensure that survival. It is usual, though not very helpful, to define the Russian Revolution as a single event which took place in October 1917.

In reality, we are dealing with a revolutionary episode which began with the overthrow of the Tsar in February 1917 and ended with the establishment of the Soviet Union in December 1922. It was a period involving the overthrow of two governments, the unilateral withdrawal of Russia from the Great War, economic, social and political collapse; famine and civil war. The Soviet Union which emerged in 1922 was a dramatically different place from the Russia which saw the overthrow of the Tsar almost five years earlier. And, it was these objective conditions that would

shape developments in the Soviet Union for the next 20 years.

There are some on the left who have a kind of idealised view of revolution. For them, the revolutionary process must follow a pre-ordained blueprint. Any change from that blueprint represents a deviation and corruption of the revolution itself and will ultimately lead to betrayal. This approach is utopian in the extreme and not based on any kind of reality.

In fact, revolutions and post-revolutionary societies emerge organically from objective circumstances and are shaped by those circumstances. The Bolshevik revolution is a classic case in point. The Bolsheviks saw their revolution as part of a wider European revolution. When that failed to materialise, they attempted to create 'socialism in one country' because there was no alternative. The ideal of a new radical democracy founded on the soviets disintegrated in the face of economic collapse, famine, war, foreign intervention and counter-revolution.

Faced with this, all that mattered was that the Bolsheviks survived in power and they could only do this thorough the imposition of an iron dictatorship. For the revolution to survive they had no choice. Later, with the country facing economic catastrophe with an economy which had ceased to function at any real



level they brought about a partial re-introduction of capitalism through the New Economic Policy. They did so because they had no choice.

One of the great myths perpetuated by some on the left was that the revolution was proceeding fine until Stalin's so-called 'revolution from above' in 1927. This had two elements; the consolidation of a Stalinist dictatorship with its mass repression and emerging cult of the personality, and a programme of forced industrialisation. For some this represented a kind of counter-revolution; the final break with the legacy of 1917. This however, does not stand up. Stalin did not create a ruthless dictatorship and mass repression. That had existed from the start. In fact, if Stalin had not emerged as the main leader how would things have been different? The Soviet Union would still have been governed by a Bolshevik dictatorship whose primary concern was to remain in power.

As for the economic break with the NEP and the programme of forced industrialisation, what was the economic situation in the Soviet Union in 1927, fully a decade after the revolution? Industrial production was at a level significantly lower than in 1914. Indeed, the Soviet Union had a smaller industrial base than Belgium. Almost every other economic indicator showed similar results. The only parts of the Soviet economy which were developing were through the richer peasants or kulaks in the countryside and capitalist elements in the cities thriving under the NEP. The Soviet Union needed to rapidly industrialise or it would perish. If Stalin had not been around this would still have been Soviet economic policy because there was no real choice.

What emerged from the 1917 Revolution was an authoritarian model of socialism. This developed through various phases from the mass terror of the Stalin period to the more benign and stable period under Khrushchev and Brezhnev. Yet the authoritarian nature of the system remained. It had an autocratic political system and an

economic system based on universal state ownership which included everything from nuclear power stations to local shops (although the latter were fairly scarce).

By the 1980s, the Soviet Union was at a crossroads. It could remain more or less as it was with some minor reforms along the way. It could make the transformation from an authoritarian model of socialism to a more democratic and open model of the system or it could do neither and collapse paving the way for the re-introduction of capitalism. Of course, this was the worst option and unfortunately the one which unfolded.



For all its faults the collapse of the Soviet Union was one of the greatest geopolitical disasters of the twentieth century and a hammer blow for the international socialist movement. Twenty seven years on the movement is still trying to come to terms with this event. It was a disaster for the peoples of Russia and beyond who by almost every social and economic indicator are still in a much worse place than then. It allowed capitalism to become a truly global system for the first time and it created a dangerously unbalanced world in which American imperialism could proceed pretty much unchallenged.

What does the Bolshevik revolution tell us about the nature of revolution generally? The experience to date is that such revolutions have come about through social and economic collapse and war as in Russia. Socialist transformation came to most of central Europe on the backs of Soviet tanks in countries

either occupied by or allied to Nazi Germany. The Chinese revolution emerged out of thirty years of civil war, foreign occupation and general chaos. Elsewhere, we saw societies emerge in the struggle against the most violent forms of colonialism and imperialism as in Vietnam. No wonder that the post-revolutionary societies which emerged were deeply scarred.

In modern industrial and post-industrial society, it would be difficult to foresee any of the above scenarios. Even in the worst examples of capitalist economic crisis, the idea that society itself would collapse is unimaginable. Also why would any socialist want this with all its resulting human suffering? In such societies such as Britain or Scotland there has to be a different road to socialism.

This would involve the election of a socialist government carrying a programme of radical social and economic reforms sustained by a mass movement outside parliament. This programme would include extending public ownership, strengthening democracy and engaging in a continuous battle of ideas in the face of what would be fierce capitalist opposition. The overall aim would be to so change the balance of forces between capitalism and socialism in favour of the latter in a way that would make the final transition to socialism much more feasible. Such an approach recognises that this transition, i.e., revolution, will not be a single act but a process. And, it recognises that the way we achieve this revolution will shape the post-revolutionary society which emerges.

William Bonnar is a founding member of the Scottish Socialist Party and was previously a member of the editorial board of Marxism Today

From February to October – how revolution unfolded

Dave Sherry looks at the achievements of the new order

On International Women's Day, 23 February 1917, thousands of angry women workers stormed out of the textile plants in Petrograd, the imperial capital of Russia and fifth biggest city in Europe. Although they did not yet know it, their strikes would ignite the second Russian Revolution in twelve years. Unlike its 1905 predecessor, this uprising would topple the hated Tsarist autocracy and open up the road to the first workers' government in history - and to a Europe-wide revolt that would topple three other great Empires and end the First World War.

The women who were about to change history- many with husbands conscripted in the Tsarist army on the Eastern front - were in a militant mood for not just the strikers but also the soldier's wives forced to queue for hours in cold, wintry Petrograd for bread and fuel.

Together, they took over the streets, defying the Tsar's Cossack cavalry. By noon, 50,000 other workers had joined them on an angry protest in the city centre. Earlier that morning, the striking women had marched through the factory districts, targeting the male workers in the big engineering plants and calling on them to down tools and join them. Most of them did.

The women went far beyond what the revolutionaries and the leaders of the workers' leaders thought feasible or sensible in the circumstances. It was the women who took the lead in approaching the troops to persuade them not to fire on the demonstrators.

The world was in its the third year of the greatest mass slaughter ever seen and there was no end in sight. The relentless profiteering and the one-sided sacrifices imposed on the poor brought strikes, riots and demonstrations to every major

European power. Resistance had spread to the trenches. Mutiny, desertions and a readiness to fraternise with 'the enemy' meant disruption and class war at the front. Something had to give and Tsarist Russia was the weakest link.

War was capital's response to its deepening crisis of profits and competition. In August 1914, the economic rivalry of the great imperial powers shifted onto the battlefield. The workers and the poor became its cannon fodder. It lasted four years taking twenty million lives with another thirty five million maimed or wounded.



With the exception of the Bolsheviks, the Serbian and Bulgarian socialists and a few brave souls elsewhere, the leaders of European social democracy capitulated to patriotism in 1914 - abandoning their talk of internationalism to back their own ruling classes. Behind the lie of a 'war for democracy', Britain, France, Russia and Italy had colluded on how they would divide the spoils once they had defeated Germany and her allies. In 1917 the USA joined in.

Lenin, the leader of the Bolsheviks, mocked their hypocrisy: 'The bourgeoisie of each country claims it is out to defeat the enemy not for plunder and the seizure of territory, but for the liberation of all other peoples except its own'.

Everything written about the horrors

of the Western Front applied to the Eastern Front and then some. In the first ten months, Russia's armies lost 300,000 men a month- dead, wounded or taken prisoner. From then until late 1917, its average *monthly* losses were 40,000 dead, 120,000 wounded and 60,000 missing or taken prisoner.

Tsarism was finding the task of fighting a full-scale modern war impossible. The corrupt Romanov regime was cracking under the strain. Military incompetence brought humiliation. Unable to meet even the minimal needs of its population and incapable of relinquishing even a modicum of power to anyone else, the autocracy was doomed.

In Petrograd, the events begun on the morning of 23 February triggered mass strikes and demonstrations that brought the city to a standstill. The Tsar's troops, when ordered to fire on the demonstrators, ignored their commanders and sided with the protests. Some even shot their officers.

Soldiers stormed the jails releasing the political prisoners. Regiments sent back from the front to restore order joined the revolution. A similar pattern followed in Moscow and other Russian towns and cities.

Tsar Nicholas II's generals told him there was no chance of restoring order unless he stood down. Revolution was announced to a startled world by radio.

The casualties in February were considerable. The Tsar's secret police machine-gunned the crowds and some police were beaten or killed in retaliation. But the new Russia was born in jubilation.

Ecstatic crowds of citizens and soldiers joined marches and enormous public meetings to mark

the change. One socialist newspaper outlawed from the start of the war but now selling widely, wryly cautioned: 'the yellow press now calls itself non-party socialist while the banks try to protect themselves by raising the red banner of revolution over their buildings'.

The Romanov dynasty that had ruled Russia since 1613 was blown away in eight days, fallen to a spontaneous, popular revolution -but February was only the start.

An unelected Provisional government, committed to modernising Russia along the lines of Western capitalism, filled the vacuum at the top of society. Dominated by landowners and industrialists, it was determined to continue the war but it was forced to share power with the workers', soldiers' and peasants' councils - the soviets that had been set up in the course of the February overthrow.

Directly elected by the people and governed, soviet delegates were unpaid and subject to immediate recall by their voters - much more democratic than any parliament. Within weeks there was no town in Russia without its soviet. Working people were creating the machinery for their own emancipation.

The overthrow of the Tsar alarmed the rulers of Britain, France and Germany – in Britain the royals had already been forced to change their name from Saxe-Coburg and Gotha to Windsor. King George V and his cabinet were worried he would follow the fate of the Romanovs.

The February revolution did not bring an end to the war. With the hardships that had produced, it continued and with the poor peasants still denied the land, the Provisional government was doomed. All that remained in doubt was whether it would be overthrown by a military coup or by a socialist revolution.

Such a coup was attempted in August and had it succeeded the working class would have been drowned in blood with Russia's large Jewish population scapegoated.

The word for fascism would have come into the world not as an Italian word from 1922 but a Russian word from 1917. But the generals were defeated and the Soviets, now under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, carried through a second revolution in October that installed the working class in power.

The Revolution in its earliest days delivered an amazing social transformation for the poor and the oppressed: workers' control over production; the division of the rich landlords' property among the poor peasants and agricultural labourers; self-determination for the oppressed nationalities of the old tsarist Empire; and the ending of discrimination against Jews, Muslims and other persecuted minorities.

The most impressive achievements came from the concerted attempt to end women's oppression. There was a flood of social reforms far in advance of anything in even the most advanced capitalist countries of the time. These gave women the vote; legalised divorce and established state run crèches, nurseries, communal laundries and restaurants.

Russia became the first country in the world to legalise abortion and make abortion and contraception safe and freely available. A whole host of provisions for pregnant and nursing mothers was introduced and made freely available.

The distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children was abolished. The Tsarist laws against gays were ended - an important step in the fight against oppression and the constraints imposed on the individual by the old state, its 'official' religion and its false idyll of family life.

Russia underwent a genuine, if unfinished, sexual revolution. We can look back to that era with pride -an example of the gains that can be won for genuine equality and sexual liberation through class struggle – gains that far outstripped anything available to women or LGBT+ people in the 'advanced states' of Europe or the USA.

October had a tremendous impact internationally, inspiring the oppressed and exploited throughout the world. In every country, men and women rallied in support of the revolution that had brought hope for a brighter future into a world brutalised by imperialist war.

Ultimate success– as the Bolsheviks well knew–depended on the revolution spreading west to Germany, Austro- Hungary and Western Europe. It did but the defeat of the German Revolution and Lenin's death in 1924 meant the isolation of Russia, which in turn led to the triumph of Stalin and the rise of state capitalism by the end of the decade.

That is another story but the subsequent isolation and defeat of the revolution was a terrible setback, not only for the left but for all humanity. It led to the barbarisms of the 1930s and 1940s –the swastika, the holocaust, Stalin's labour camps, the Second World War, the atom bomb and Hiroshima.

Revolutions that are defeated are soon forgotten: but not the Russian Revolution. No one can make sense of our world today without an understanding of it. Everything that happened since has been shaped by it. It remains the biggest social movement the world has ever seen; the most successful anti-war movement ever built.

That is why its centenary matters so much. Its lesson of the self-emancipation of the working class will never be forgotten. 1917 lights the present and the future as well as our past.

Dave Sherry is a long-standing member of the SWP and author of a forthcoming book on the Russian Revolution

Note: Until 1918, Russia used the Julian calendar, 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar in the West. That is why the two revolutions of 1917 are referred to as the February and October revolutions. According to the Western calendar, they took place in March and November. .

By default, the triumph of neo-liberal capitalism?

Pat Kelly looks at the impact of the implosion of Soviet socialism



The triumph of the Russian Revolution nearly a century ago was the first time in history that the working class was able to seize and hold power, and to reorganize the economy and society on a socialist basis. From being the least developed of the big European countries at the time of the revolution, forty years later the Soviet Union was the second largest economy in the world. There were many factors that contributed to its downfall, but this article will look at the legacy of the Soviet Union in terms of a) how it helped social democracy flourish in western capitalist countries; b) how it assisted the anti-imperialist struggle of oppressed nations; and c) how the collapse of an ideological competitor has weakened the left and allowed neo-liberalism to triumph.

The halcyon days of social democracy in Western capitalist countries was the period from 1945-1975, when living standards rose at an unprecedented rate. The working class was organized and united, and after the experience of the Second World War, was determined to ensure there would be no return to the unemployment and conditions

of the 1930s. However, there was one other weapon they could now use in their fight for social justice – what Neal Lawson, chair of the pressure group, Compass, describes as ‘the brooding presence of the Soviet Union’.

Writing in the *New Statesman* (12 May 2016), Lawson argued that: ‘Today, it is almost impossible to imagine the effect of actually existing socialism in rebalancing the post war forces in favour of labour and against capital. The owners of capital were terrified that a revolution might happen in the West as the armed forces returned home from the front. Throughout the 1960s Soviet planning was felt to be over taking US free markets in terms of productivity. The whole post war settlement was due, to a large extent, to the existence of the USSR’.

The First World War had led to the birth of the USSR and the Second World War turned it into a global superpower. By 1945, sympathy for the USSR and gratitude for the role it had played in defeating fascism was immense. As Winston Churchill stated in the House of Commons in Oct 1944: ‘I have always believed and I still believe that it is the Red

Army that has torn the guts out of the filthy Nazis’.

In every European country, Communist Parties were growing rapidly in size and influence. Some had formed governments or were in coalition governments with other parties. By 1947, Greece was one of the few countries in Eastern Europe where Communists were not involved in government, prevented from doing so by the intervention of the British Army. The Chinese revolution had increased the number of states under Marxist leadership to eleven.

After a visit to Europe, the US Secretary of State, George Marshall, reported back that he believed the whole of Europe was about to embrace Communism. As a result, the European Recovery Programme, which became known as the Marshall Plan, was put into place. This was a programme of massive economic aid given by the United States to favoured countries in Western Europe for the rebuilding of capitalism. Only those countries which were prepared to line up with the US against the Soviet Union would receive any aid.

In conjunction with monetary arrangements previously established, Marshall Aid was used systematically to pressure governments and voters in countries like France and Italy into rejecting Communism in exchange for aid. As a *quid pro quo*, the US accepted use of Keynesian economic policies to provide welfare and jobs for workers. In essence, it encouraged European governments to promote social democratic policies to ‘buy off’ their working class.

Britain had already moved in that direction. There had been economic stagnation in the 1920s, followed by a decade of high unemployment

before the war. The establishment was terrified of a repetition of the wave of revolutionary struggles that took place after the First World War. Quintin Hogg, who later became a Tory cabinet minister, warned parliament in 1943: 'If you don't give the people social reform, they will give you social revolution'. With the armed forces returning from the war radicalised, social democracy became more attractive to capitalism as a safeguard against social revolution and the threat of a global communist movement.

The Labour Government that was elected in 1945 began an ambitious programme of reforms of welfare, education, and nationalisation. Many of these policies had been discussed during the War by politicians of all parties and some of them were already outlined before Labour surprisingly won the 1945 election. Despite their ideological differences, the Tories accepted most of the reforms and a consensus developed around key features.

Labour and Tory Governments from 1945-1979 accepted a commitment to maintain full employment by adopting Keynesian techniques of economic management; acceptance of the role of unions including their access to government; a mixed economy with the state control of some of the key industries; agreement on the welfare state, in particular the National Health Service; and many other areas of consensus including progressive taxation policies. Throughout the advanced capitalist economies similar policies were pursued.

From the 1930s to the beginning of the 1960s, even many non-socialist economists regarded the Soviet Union as a more dynamic system than capitalism and a viable global alternative. Harold McMillan, when he was conservative PM in the 1960s, believed the socialist economies could out-produce capitalism (see Eric Hobsbawm, *How to Change the World*, 2012). Therefore, the West had to

compete with the USSR to retain workers loyalties with promises of comparable welfare programs and greater individual consumption. Fear of the USSR, the power of the communist parties in certain European countries, and their direct and indirect influence on trade-unionism weakened the establishment's resistance to social progress.

The Soviet Union was of key significance to the nations which had been colonized and exploited by the imperialist powers. The national liberation movements became established as a major force in the struggle for national self-determination and made huge gains across the world following the Second World War. Material assistance, including the supply of weapons, military training and diplomatic support, was provided by the Soviet Union. Many students from the national liberation movements received their education and military training in Moscow. Most of the new nations which came into being after the Second World War began their nation-building task with close political, military and economic ties to the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union played vital roles in other international developments. The victory for the left in Cuba was consolidated by Soviet support, and after a prolonged struggle the Vietnamese people defeated the United States. In Africa, the USSR's support for the MPLA in Angola was critical in the struggle for the country's independence. When the South Africans invaded Angola, they were defeated by combined Angolan and Cuban forces, crucial to the liberation of not just Angola but Namibia, Zimbabwe and eventually South Africa. Others countries declared themselves as socialist or aiming to be socialist. These states faced the active hostility of the USA, but in the Soviet Union they had an ally. Since its collapse, many of these connections have been cut and the result has forced many developing countries to increase their dependency on the west.

The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in the removal of a strong competitor in global affairs and the only state that could challenge the power of the US militarily. The Gulf war of 1991 and the subsequent annihilation of Iraq, the dismemberment of Yugoslavia, and the interventions in a range of other countries during the last two decades might have been prevented if not for the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Of course, the threat of the Soviet Union's model of socialism as a serious alternative to capitalism disappeared long before the collapse of the USSR in 1989, and it could be safely ignored when the first steps towards neo-liberalism were taken by Thatcher and Reagan. The ruling class became emboldened and stripped away at workers' rights without fear of the political pressure of a socialist example. Without the presence of a socialist alternative there is no longer a requirement for capitalism to make the same compromises with social democracy.

Although social democratic parties were returned to power subsequently, they did not pursue social democratic policies, but instead embraced neo-liberalism. It was the misfortune of a number of them, including the British Labour Party, that the crash of 2008 happened on their watch and they are now paying the price of ignoring their own working class grass roots during this period in office. 'The brooding presence of the Soviet Union' is no longer there and the removal of an ideological challenge has weakened the labour movement and the left internationally.

Pat Kelly was a Scottish secretary of the PCS union and past president of the STUC

Red October and communists in Scotland

John Foster recounts the roots of Red Clydeside and the influence of the October revolution

Through most of the last century communists were the dominant force on Scotland's left. The left-wingers who took their inspiration from Russia's October revolution had a key influence on the movement of resistance to the First World War. They led the political general strike of January-February 1919, gave leadership in the miners' struggle through the General Strike and beyond, and in the 1920s and 1930s developed the unemployed workers' movement.

In the 1940s and 1950s, it was communists who battled on equal pay and mobilised apprentices and young workers. The redevelopment of the shop stewards movement as a politically independent force was also led by communists and was critical for victories in the UCS work-in, for the two miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974 and for the defeat of the *Industrial Relations Act 1971*. Even in 1984-1985, it was Communist Party members who helped maintain morale and resistance among mining communities defending their industry against the Thatcher government.

None of this was done by communists alone. Their ability to do so lay in the organisational principle, adopted from the Bolsheviks, of working collectively in workplaces and communities in alliances with other workers on immediate issues. Victory depended on the ability to mobilise this wider base. And while the Communist Party was never very successful on the electoral front, it did exercise significant political influence: developing support across the political spectrum for the anti-fascist struggle in Spain, for anti-colonialism and opposition to the Cold War, for the possibility of socialism itself and, within the STUC and the Labour Party, for a Scottish Parliament.

How then do we account for this particular strength in Scotland – paralleled, indeed, in parts of South Wales, London's industrial East End and some mining areas but not consistently across Britain as a whole? How far does this strength stem from a particular conjuncture between Clydeside's working class politics and the impact of the October Revolution – and in this regard what made the October Revolution so different from the February Revolution in its effects?



The February Revolution did have a major impact on Clydeside. Mass meetings celebrated the overthrow of the Tsar and a new political order in which social democrats held leading positions. But it did not end the war. On the contrary, the right wing social democrats and ex-Tsarist ministers who composed the Provisional Government were welcomed by their British counterparts as providing a new and efficient leadership to the war effort. For the trade union and Labour Party leaders who supported the war, and acted in Britain as the government's agents in enforcing its requirements in industry, the February Revolution provided a cloak of international respectability. It correspondingly undermined

the rank-and-file shop stewards defending wages and conditions and resisting the conscription of fellow workers as well as those in the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and elsewhere taking an anti-war and anti-conscription stand.

The October Revolution did the reverse. The Bolshevik government ended the war and published the secret treaties exposing its imperialist war aims. And as the treacherous nature of Kerensky's relationship with the Tsarist officer corps became clear, it discredited the Labour and trade union leaders who had associated with him. In terms of the ability of the anti-war stewards to gain a *political* hearing in the yards and factories, the news of the revolution seems to have marked a decisive turning point. The Ministry of Munitions Clyde Labour Report for 15 December 1917 warned that 'the early months of 1918 may reveal industrial action with a view to the achievement of political ends in the termination of war conditions'. January saw a massive upsurge of industrial unrest: three quarters of *all* time lost in industrial disputes across Britain was on Clydeside. When Auckland Geddes, Minister for National Service, tried to intervene, a mass meeting of shop-stewards gave him a riotous hearing and backed Soviet peace policy. By February, Munitions Minister, Winston Churchill, was writing to the Cabinet that the wage issue was not the main one on Clydeside: 'the unrest was due to the activities of a pacifist and revolutionary section of the men industriously working on the discontent'. We know that in February a quite disproportionate share of the government's propaganda budget was spent on Clydeside, on pro-war films, leaflets and the organisation of workplace meetings – followed by the detailed arrests (or conscription) of known troublemakers, one of the first being the recently appointed Soviet

Consul, John Maclean.

But neither the repression nor the propaganda seems to have been successful. Two months later Glasgow's illegal May Day strike and demonstration attracted around 100,000 – passing resolutions in support of the Soviet Revolution, the end of the war and the release of Maclean. Another six months on, Neil McLean, anti-war socialist, was the only successful Labour candidate in Glasgow when he won Govan on a 'Hands off Russia' ticket. The defeated Unionist complained 'going round Govan he had found a spirit he had never expected to find ... that was light-heartedly prepared to advocate tomorrow the revolution they had had in Russia'. Then, just a month later, there was the remarkable political general strike – initially based among the radicalised younger workers in the shipyards but which spread very quickly across industrial Scotland.

So there are a couple of questions here. What made at least a significant minority of workers on Clydeside particularly susceptible to a Bolshevik perspective and how far was this base for left and then communist politics carried forward?

Four factors, in combination, may explain the special responsiveness. First the vigour of the shop stewards movement on the Clyde and the degree to which right-wing union officers had lost credibility early in war. Second, the organisational and political direction given to this movement by the Clyde Workers' Committee. Third, the strength of the anti-war movement within the *main* party of the left, the ILP. Finally, a wider politicisation across hitherto unorganised sections of the workforce and across working class communities as a result of struggles on housing, conscription and food rationing.

Within the ILP the issue of peace and anti-imperialism seems to have been critical. In a debate with one of the leaders of the Clyde Workers' Committee and future Communist Party MP, Willie Gallacher, in December 1917,

future Labour MP John Wheatley attacked the Bolsheviks for opposing parliamentary democracy. Gallacher hit back: to end the war you must end capitalism. For ILP leaders like Helen Crawford and Walton Newbold peace seems to have been the key issue - as well as for the majority of the Scottish ILP's rank-and-file membership, particularly those on industrial Clydeside, who later voted two years running to join the Third Communist International.

By 1919-1920 a whole range of political leaders across Scotland identified with Bolshevik politics: Tom Bell, Arthur McManus, Arthur Geddes, Aitken Ferguson, Neil McLean, John S Clarke, Bob Stewart in Dundee, Robert Page Arnot, Gallacher, JR Campbell, Crawford and Newbold.

The second question then follows - why, if this was the case, was the actual membership of the Communist Party in the early 1920s, compared to the ILP, apparently so sparse and tenuous? Was it, as government propagandists said at the time (echoed by a number of historians since), that the party itself was an alien and divisive creation sustained by Soviet gold?

It is true that by 1921-1922 the Communist's industrial base had collapsed. Mass unemployment, emigration, the detailed elimination of left shop stewards and the 1921 miners' defeat gravely weakened its workplace power. Yet a wider base for pro-Bolshevik politics survived. Election results show that. In 1922, Walton Newbold won Motherwell, Neil McLean held Govan, Geddes came within 600 votes of winning Greenock and a few months later Aitken Ferguson came within a similar number of votes of winning Anderson. Where war-

time radicalisation had been most intense, support still existed.

But there was probably a more fundamental principle at work. The Bolsheviks' conviction that socialism depended on the transformation of state power matched Clydeside's organisational experience of workers' committees during the war and after. In 1920, during the campaign to halt British intervention in Russia, Councils of Action, based on Trades and Labour Councils, had given this renewed expression. In the months before Red Friday in 1925 and the 1926 General Strike, the Communists were able to reconstruct much of their industrial base and for ten days in May 1926 Trades Councils once more transformed themselves into mass organisations of working class democracy. 'All Power to the Soviets' continued to dig itself into the consciousness of a generation.

John Foster is International Secretary of the Communist Party of Britain

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Gorki in Glasgow: Glasgow Unity's production of *The Lower Depths*.

Stephen Collins looks at how Russian social realism was adapted for Scotland

Glasgow Unity Theatre existed from 1940-1951. The aim of the company was to create 'a native theatre, something which is essentially reflecting the lives of the ordinary people in Scotland'. However, to help them achieve a 'native theatre' the company's first professional production was a Russian play, Maxim Gorki's (1868-1936), *The Lower Depths*. The focus of this article is to examine how the staging of a play by a man considered the founder of Russian social realism, resonated with Unity's desire to reflect the lives of the Scottish working class.

The Lower Depths premiered at the Moscow Art Theatre in 1902 with Constantin Stanislavski acting and directing. In his autobiography, Stanislavski relates a conversation with Gorki that took place a year before the play was staged, in which the playwright described his idea:

It was to be laid in a poor lodging house, stuffy atmosphere, wooden bunks, during a long monotonous winter. The people had been bestialized by the hideousness of their existence, they had lost patience and hope, and being depleted of patience they nag each other. Each one tried to prove the other is still a human being.

As Stanislavski alludes to, the play depicts the lives of several characters brought together through poverty into the cellar of a homeless shelter or lodging house. There, the characters move through various bleak interactions until the eventual suicide of the Actor, which is met by ambivalence. The play's setting, characters and lifestyle are clearly Russian. In Laurence Irving's 1911 translation the characters discuss paying for goods in *kopyeks*, and the character names: Luka, Kvashnya and Vassilisa, ensure that the viewer

is left in no doubt as to where the play is set. As such, as writer John Hill noted, it seemed a curious choice for a company committed to developing 'a theatre indigenous to the people of Glasgow in particular and Scotland in general'.

Glasgow Unity was formed in December 1940, as combination of the Glasgow Corporation of Transport Players, the Jewish Institute Players, the Glasgow Workers' Theatre group, the Clarion Players and the Glasgow Players. Bill Findlay noted that 'each had left wing leanings' and that the Glasgow Players (formerly The Scottish Labour College) had been founded in 1915 'by the Red Clydeside leader John Maclean'. David Hutchinson, in *A History of Scottish Theatre*, described Unity as first and foremost 'committedly proletarian'. The company turned professional in 1945 with Robert Mitchell, an electrician and union convenor, as their first director.

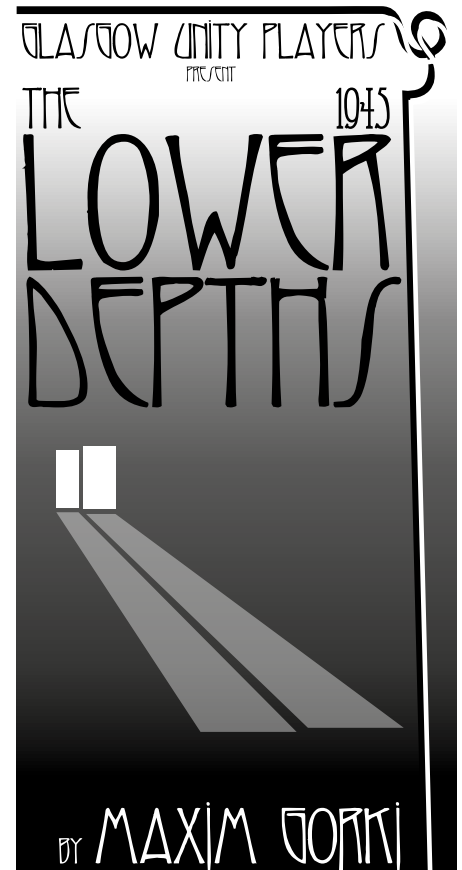
Unity's two major interrelated aims were to develop Scottish plays and Scottish actors who, in Mitchell's words, would not have to 'first spend years of his life getting the Scots quality knocked out of him', and also to use theatre as a means of representing the lives of ordinary Glaswegians on stage. In its 1943 Manifesto, Unity's members described the aims of the company:

We in Glasgow Unity Theatre are a group of Glasgow workers interested in the theatre, who intend to put on real plays for the entertainment and education of our fellow workers. Our main purpose is to build a people's theatre in Glasgow. All our activities are centered to this aim, for we believe that Glasgow has a great need for a Real Theatre, where life can be presented and interpreted without prejudice or without being

biased by the controlling interests which have so far strangled the professional theatre.

Bill Findlay noted that 'Real Theatre' would come as a consequence of having a company of actors drawn mainly from a working-class background 'who would look to their own lives in developing a company style that was true-to-life, and who would operate as a democratic, co-operative ensemble'. To this end, Unity's personnel were drawn, according to John Hill, 'from the ranks of ordinary working people, whose background and everyday life is identical with the masses who form its audience'. Thus, Unity aimed to develop a synergy between the material presented on stage and the audience that viewed it. To do so, Robert Mitchell turned to Maxim Gorki.

Mitchell's adaptation of *The Lower Depths* played at the Athenaeum in Glasgow in April 1945. Clearly,



its urban setting and lower-class characters mirrored Mitchell's wish to present plays about working class, urban experience. Colin Chambers observed at the time, that the production resisted 'any attempt ... to become 'Russian'. Moreover, Findlay suggests that one of the most radical elements of the production was its 'departure from the convention in Scottish theatre of the time to deliver lines in accent of the London West End Stage'. However, this is not immediately evident in the text. The following is taken from Mitchell's adaptation:

Mied: All crooks are clever, I know. They couldn't do a thing without brains. An honest man is right even if he is an idiot. But a crook must have brains. But speaking about camels, you're wrong. You can ride them. They have no horns or teeth either.

The same section from Laurence Irving's translation reads as follows:

Myedvyedyeff: Sharpers... they're all clever ... I know! They 'ave got to be clever. A good mn he – may be stupid and good, but a wrong 'un, 'e's bound to 'ave wits. But, that camel, yer know ... yer can get me on 'im ... 'e 'asn't no 'orns, not no teeth.

Irving's translation was first performed in December 1911 at the Kingsway Theatre in London and a brief comparison of these passages demonstrates that, if anything, the dialogue written by Irving is more colorful, fuller of colloquialisms and local dialect. Mitchell's version is not written in Scots or Glaswegian dialect and the colloquial energy evident in Irving's translation is absent. Indeed, Findlay goes so far as to call the language in Mitchell's version 'relatively colourless and ... in some respects, lifeless'.

However, what does come through is the relative mundanity of the conversation as the characters fill their time without dramatic drive. This hints that the impact of the play

lay in both the themes of the play *and* in Mitchell's choice to have his actors interpret and deliver the lines in their own dialect. Indeed, Findlay suggests that there was an attempt to 'Glaswegianize' the dialogue in performance. Thus the performance did not simply fail to adopt a Russian idiom as suggested by Colin Chambers, but actively chose to adopt a Glaswegian one, thereby enhancing the social realist aesthetic and transposing Gorki's depiction of a disenfranchised and 'bestialized' poor to the slums of Glasgow.

It is worth recalling that Unity was not the first company in Scotland to stage *The Lower Depths*. The Scottish Repertory Company staged a performance of Irving's translation in 1914 at the Royalty Theatre in Glasgow. This production starred the Russian actress, Lydia Yavorska, and so the production would have presumably emphasised the characters and their struggles as Russian; as an insight into the lives of foreigners far away. Unity's production, through the 'Glaswegianised' delivery, would have highlighted to the audience that these themes were as present on the streets of Glasgow as they were in Moscow.

The production was a critical success; it transferred to London and was revived for the Edinburgh Festival in 1947. Despite this and other successes, Unity folded in 1951. Unity's failure to progress resides in a number of factors. The main one was its competition with the Citizens' Theatre for funds from the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA). CEMA was the precursor of the Arts Council, and in its 1946 charter it set down that it was concerned with funding the fine arts exclusively.

Perhaps ironically, its attempts to reflect reality contributed to Unity's demise. A perceived lack of professionalism in its actors compared to the Citizens' company, which John Hill noted, 'on their formation had hired an English director ... and a nucleus of West

End actors' meant CEMA looked more favorably on supporting the development of the Citizens and its aim, according to Hill, to 'improve the cultural tastes of the nation', rather than reflecting the lives of the urban poor.

Finally, to return to the central question of why Mitchell turned to Gorki in order to express his desire to develop a 'native drama'. Mitchell's choice reflects the men's shared belief in depicting life stripped of simple narrative resolution; a desire to challenge audiences with moral ambiguity and, crucially, to do so using their own voice. All these elements are exemplified in a production that, as Bill Findlay noted, had a 'special significance as an exemplar of the 'artistic policy' of Unity.

Steve Collins is lecturer in Performance at the University of the West of Scotland. He combines a background in practice with his academic work. As a practitioner, he helped to establish the James Town Community Theatre in Accra and has worked as a director and facilitator throughout Scotland. As a researcher, he has a particular interest in post-colonial theatres and the legal and cultural status of performed heritage.

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Putting the politics back into local government

Dave Watson says local democracy is under pressure from Tory austerity and the Scottish Government's centralising tendencies and failure to act in defence of the communities it serves.

While the overall Scottish budget is determined by the Barnett formula, the Scottish Government decides where the axe will fall. They have chosen to cut local government disproportionately. Since police and fire services were centralised the Scottish Government's budget has increased by 3.2% in real terms, while local government has had a grant cut of 1.9%.

The draft budget for 2017/18 was published on 15 December 2016, and this continues this trend with another £327m cut from the local government allocation. After years of the regressive council tax freeze there is at least some mitigation through the band changes and a capped increase of up to 3%. But between councils the impact has not been even. A study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that across local council services, more rural councils have suffered more than more urban ones and poorer councils have

suffered more than richer ones.

The numbers are even starker when you look at workforce cuts. Between the financial crash and the last quarter of 2015, 27,000 jobs had been lost from local government (after transfers) - that's 87% of all devolved job cuts. In the current financial year, COSLA estimates an additional 7,000 job losses and the new spending plans are likely to result in more next year. The impact of cuts on the workforce is also clear from UNISON's monthly 'damage' series of surveys. Staff doing large amounts of unpaid overtime, increased levels of stress related illness and concern for their clients over the corner cutting they are forced to deliver. They paint a depressing picture of a committed, yet demoralised workforce.

The Scottish Government has centralised police and fire services. Most social work has been moved to

Integrated Joint Boards with Scottish ministers taking significant powers of direction. Community justice is administered locally, but again ministers direct policy from the centre through a new quango.

Now ministers are consulting over education reform (see Bill Ramsay in SLR 96, November-December 2016). This is spun as giving powers to schools, when in reality ministers will have effective control and new regional bodies could take the function away from local government. Councils have added to their own demise with an array of arms length bodies and privatisation, particularly in social care provision.

With education and social work going elsewhere, leisure and housing already largely gone arms-length, you are left with rump local authorities. There is a significant concern that councils could be left to wither on the vine or be merged into even larger councils.



The political response of local government to these developments has been muted - not helped by the split between COSLA and the Partnership. In fairness, COSLA has at least mounted something of a fight back. Its Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy makes a strong case against centralisation and sets out a set of sound principles that should underpin Scotland's democratic future.

At council level, the political response has been generally woeful. Proportional representation, while right in principle, has resulted in more hung councils, and that inevitably militates against political action. Senior officials are happy to encourage a technocratic leadership that rarely shows much grasp of political strategy.

The scale of cuts in the last two years has inspired some limited and welcome campaign action, including lobbying the Scottish parliament. Councils have been more willing to complain about grant allocations and there has been greater political debate in council chambers. However, few have taken political action in their own councils. If the Scottish government's unwillingness to use the devolved tax powers makes them the 'administrators of austerity', then the same can sadly be said of most councils.

This can be illustrated with a tale of two council leaders. Both took UNISON Scotland's 'Combating Austerity' toolkit back to their councils. One was told by its Chief Executive that none of the actions could be done and didn't bother to ask why. The other took it to its management team, saying, 'This looks sensible - why are we not doing it?' That council is now saving more than a million pounds, without a job being lost or a service cut back. One is a genuine council leader. The other is a passive administrator.

What councils should be doing is undertaking local economic impact assessments of the cuts; developing needs based budgeting and publishing parallel or citizens' budgets in partnership with unions and community groups; and using the purchasing power of the council to drive a fair work agenda and tackle tax dodging. Instead, most councils simply 'consult' the public over which services they should cut.

UNISON Labour Link's 'Keeping it Local'

and the Scottish Trade Union Labour Party (STULP)'s 'Workforce Agenda' sets out an alternative. Councils should be making the case for local services, promoting an inspiring and emotional vision for their local communities - not making managerial platitudes.

It is not enough for councils to complain about SNP centralisation. They have to articulate new approaches to public service reform. I set out some ideas in a Jimmy Reid Foundation paper on public service reform (see advert for the launch of this paper on p27 in this issue). In the paper, I argue the traditional way of viewing the organisation of public services is to start with central government and then consider what powers they should devolve to other national and local structures.

An alternative approach is to start with people and communities and consider what powers are granted up to local government and central government. This is a way of applying the principle of subsidiarity or what the Commission on Local Democracy called 'sovereignty'. In essence, people locally agree to share sovereignty with local, regional and national structures, because that is the most effective way of achieving our collective public service ethos. In the same way we agree, or not, to share sovereignty within the United Kingdom, the European Union, or other international organisations.

Councils used to run water, sewerage, energy, further education, police, fire, community care and public health - with a lot less central prescription as well. In large swathes of Europe, local government continues to deliver these services.

But Scottish councils are already the largest in Europe, so they have to champion service design and delivery in real communities. A number of Scottish local authorities have developed area structures to decentralise services and some have tried to integrate the delivery of services in recognisable community settings. This might point the way to a different approach to reform based on community hubs, where most services are physically or, where that is practically difficult, virtually delivered. This creates real integrated delivery, as the Christie Commission

recommended, and could include non-council services as well.

Service design would be done with citizens and front line staff adopting ideas from Systems Thinking, The Enabling State, Participatory Budgeting and Co-operative councils. These approaches can enable citizens to understand the needs of other areas and individuals as much as their own, and to think about how to create a better, more inclusive local economy, not just for themselves, but for everyone.

A revitalised local government could also promote new approaches to developing local economies using the ideas developed by the New Economics Foundation (Plugging the Gaps) and CRESC (The Foundational Economy). Councils could also rediscover municipal enterprise through community energy and use the re-regulation of buses to operate public transport.

If local government is to survive in any meaningful form, it has to radically change. That starts with a new vision of local services built on meaningful engagement with communities. Integrated services delivered in real communities, with minimal fragmentation. Councils and councillors who want to achieve political change, rather than just administer top down services. That would be a local government worth having.

Dave Watson is the Head of Policy and Public Affairs at UNISON Scotland

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For a people's local democracy

Phil McGarry outlines what progressive councils should be doing

The People's Assembly (Scotland) was formed in the early part of 2011 after the general election in 2010. We now have all the major Unions directly affiliated, including Trade Union Councils and local campaigning anti-austerity groups throughout Scotland.

Since our inception, and in accordance with our Constitution and Founding Statement, we have campaigned to lobby our governments both at Westminster and Holyrood to reverse the effects of damaging austerity, and to replace it with a set of policies to provide us with a fair, sustainable and secure future for all. No longer can we tolerate politicians looking out for themselves and for the rich and powerful. Our political representatives must start governing in the interests of the majority based on the following: a fairer economy for a fairer Britain, including Scotland; more and better jobs; high standards of social housing; protecting and improving public services; fairness and justice; and a secure and sustainable future.

Throughout our campaigning initiatives and our various public meetings and conferences, it has become abundantly clear to us that the cuts, closures and loss of jobs, particularly in Scotland, are now reaching crisis point. Some 40,000 local government jobs have gone and our public service provisions are at breaking point. Therefore, we decided some months ago that our priority was to concentrate our efforts on local government and its representatives, including council leaders and individual councillors, setting out our arguments for budget alternatives.

By mid-December 2016, we have received responses from Falkirk, Inverclyde and Inverness, together with a couple of individual councillors. This has been extremely disappointing, especially since the Fraser of Allander Institute said: 'All local authorities

could face crippling cuts of 10% arising out of a combination of a reduction in Scotland's block grant from Westminster, together with the cost of the SNP's manifesto commitments'. This equated to some £700m between next year and 2020. This estimate comes on top of the £350m reduction of last year.

Our next step is to prepare and print a *People's Manifesto – Budget Alternatives* to use amongst the general public, campaigning groups, anti-austerity organisations and trade union councils. In the main, the set of alternatives we are laying out is progressive and is not exhaustive. The political will needs to be at the forefront of these aims, and is worthy of serious consideration including: meaningful engagement and joint working with the recognised unions/ People's Assemblies to campaign for fairness, justice and against austerity; no compulsory redundancies; no to externalisation and/or privatisation and outsourcing; better utilisation of council reserves; a more coherent and joined up national campaign against Westminster and Scottish government austerity; issuing of bonds to raise funds more cheaply; re-financing of PFI and other debts; signing up to UNISON'S Ethical Care Charter; campaigning for a debt amnesty for historic debt where Unite Scotland's estimates that 44p of every £1 collected in Council Tax in Scotland goes towards paying off debt; produce parallel or citizens budgets that illustrate the need for services and the associated costs, combined with local impact statements for both budgets; campaign for an amnesty for pre-devolution debt owed to the Treasury's Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) - this could reduce the amount by around 10p in the £1 thus freeing up around £194m per year to invest in cut-hit council services; no more wage freezes – pay council employees a decent cost of living wage increase; no

more tokenistic consultations so there is genuine community engagement and consultation; and stop using the language of 'customers' and talk instead of citizens, residents, service users and council employees who have needs and expectations.

We note with despair the Draft Budget delivered to the Scottish Parliament by the Finance Minister, Derek Mackay MSP. Whilst there may be some merit in tinkering with the Council Tax bands and transferring this money to Head Teachers and the lifting of the freeze on Council Tax, together with further investment in the NHS Social Care budget, it becomes clear to many that several of these initiatives are outwith the control of local authorities.

Mackay's speech to parliament stated: 'that an increase in spending power on local government services equates to £240.6m'. This is all smoke and mirrors as councils do not have any say or control over such matters. All the extra money suggested is to be ring-fenced for government priorities. Clearly, the Scottish Government has failed to use its income tax powers that it has argued for consistently.

Local authorities across Scotland are still predicting huge budget deficits next year and every year up to 2020. All councils need investment and cannot continue to absorb cuts to funding on the levels they have had to contend with. Our alternatives could assist local authorities if the political will is there. We will support those councils who give these matters serious consideration and publish their position accordingly.

Phil McGarry is the Chair of the People's Assembly (Scotland)



If democracy is anywhere, it should be local

Willie Sullivan considers what local democracy should look like

A quarter of Scots in a recent BMG poll for the Electoral Reform Society (Herald 20 November 2016) said they would rather finish the ironing than go out and vote in a council election. While our commitment to neat clothing is commendable, our disregard for local democracy is both frightening and understandable.

Westminster elections have always had the highest levels of voter turnout in any elections in Scotland. In council elections, the vote has only ever reached over 50% when it was coupled with Scottish Parliament elections, peaking in 1999 at 58%, when they were joined up with the first vote for the new Parliament. The last council election in 2012 was decoupled from the Scottish Parliament elections and turnout fell to 39%. No doubt such a large drop was an effect of the elections standing alone but this was also the lowest turnout in Scottish local elections since the wholesale restructuring of local government in 1974.

While we Scots like to think of ourselves as different, we are often still very 'British'. Status and power is built around hierarchy with the most 'important' being at the top. Harking back not to legitimacy awarded from

the people but what seems like a psychological throwback to the divine right of kings.

If the people truly are the source of legitimacy, then the why is it that local democracy - close to where we live, the communities, the towns and villages that we think of as 'our' places - seems to be even less important to us than the faltering British state? This is also where the many of the services that touch our lives most are said to be run from; planning, education, town centres, roads and transport, parks and open spaces, community safety, housing etc. Should this not be where most of our democratic interest lies?

It would be naïve to attempt to look at the problems of the local state without viewing them in the context of the problems for the state as an entire institution. Or, to single out the state as the only institution that seems insufficient in a changed time. All of them: banks, political parties, media, financial and economic system, unions, civil service, even charities; all designed in a time of 'Fordism' have scraped and ground forward like tectonic plates. While in contrast, our society although still dependent upon them, has moved at the speed of light. Information, communication and crucially the

relationships and perspectives formed by them have been driven by a technological revolution as profound as it is rupturing. It is little wonder that these institutions now seem unfit for purpose.

Add to this the realisation that global capital relies less and less on democratic states to facilitate trade and markets, we see we are trying to operate in an environment increasingly hostile to democracy. The difficulty of siting great power in institutions that were supposed to reflect our society is that often that power was used to resist responding to external pressures that might have caused evolution. The mechanisms that were supposed to make them responsive, most importantly elections and then measuring public opinion have long ago diminished in potency.

The steady erosion of trust in these symbols is deeply harmful to democracy as an idea. Thanks to the freeing up of information people suspect they can now see that they are being manipulated. Spin, public relations and marketing techniques (often taken from sociology and misused) have sought to tell us particular stories about our lives and the world. Public 'narrative creation' has become a sophisticated



technique of protecting established power relationships. It is now the case that more and more people can feel the difference between 'the story' and the reality. Both the institutions and the mechanisms that are supposed to make them accountable have ever decreasing levels of legitimacy. This disconnect is throwing up an increasing numbers of morbid symptoms including eye watering inequality and resultant populist shocks.

A significant part of the population is struggling, poor or in debt or often both. Despite the ramping up of state systems of discipline through the welfare state and 'blame shaming' through narrative creation mentioned above, people are no longer willing to accept only individual responsibility for their struggles. Many feel humiliated, they try so hard yet still fail in creating the lives we are all told we should have. This humiliation is a powerful sentiment driving disillusion.

The local state is part of this. Developed from a history and culture of feudalism and peaking in trust as most of our democracy did at the heights of equality and social mobility in the late 1960s, it has been in steady decline ever since. It was sometimes corrupt and unfair. Obvious examples are council house allocation through a 'kent councillor' or the buying of the planning system. Local government was also peopled with committed and caring public servants determined to make their communities fairer and better. Often they were fighting rear guard actions against the effects of central government policy or of different parts of their own organisations. Often, they had victories but not often enough.

Whatever we thought democracy was – from voting and representation to free markets, solidarity, or trust in government – our understandings now seem grossly insufficient to deal with a time of growing inequality, populist shocks, anger, resentment, and information so free its meaning is as diffuse as fresh air.

Our system of democracy was probably never as good as we were

told it was. Locally it has become too distant from our home towns and too rigid and too 'system like' to feel human enough. Captured by accountants, ideas of efficiency are only measured on spreadsheets while at the same time people are powerless, often sad and unfulfilled.

If we believe in the ideal of 'government of the people, by the people, for the people', it is clearly a crucial moment to remake it in a new and better form. This is okay, and perhaps that is part of the resilience of democratic systems - that they are fluid enough to be remade again and again. But we must be careful not to fall into the 'confidence trap' and believe democracies' resilience up until now is wholly a feature of the system. It is not, and if we want to protect ourselves against at worst demagoguery and despotism and, at best, apathy and alienation, we need to do something about it.

Einstein said 'you can't solve a problem with the same thinking that created it' - expert driven top down solutions without community support are an erosion of democracy its recreation can only come from the bottom up.

Local government is an old institution, and seems like one of those listed Victorian facades you occasionally spot on renovation sites. When you see behind it, there is nothing holding it up but metal props. If local democracy and the services that should be within peoples' control is to flourish, then it must be built on a new foundation.

Not the rigid inflexible girders of past empires but something in tune with the networked society described by people like Manuel Castells. Services run by people for people. Community housing coops, energy companies, democratic schools, care coops, democratic unions helping run businesses, clubs and charities providing services including leisure and sport all making up a Scotland that is a honeycomb of democratic spaces.

Small and local but strong and nationally connected, the most solid of networks upon which our

representative state democracy can rest. This should not be in competition with the state or with anyone else. The state must evolve to facilitate and support the rise of this 'democratic society'.

'Prefiguration' is the sort of word Ed Miliband might have used. The meaning is sharper than its syllables suggest: it means that if people starting to behave as if they live in the society they want to be part of, then it is more likely to come about. Ghandi captured the idea more succinctly when he said 'be the change you wish to see in the world'. Or, as Alistair Gray said to Scots: 'Act as if you live in the early days of a better Nation'.

The Electoral Reform Society is part of a modest intervention to create several small but significant acts that might snowball into something ambitious enough to save and remake Scottish local democracy. Along with many others, we have launched a campaign that is encouraging Scots to 'act as if they own the place': to organise a gathering where for a short time they can imagine what it would feel like and what they would do if they ran their own town, village, community - and then to think about how they might make these imaginings more real.

Simone Weil said that 'imagination is always the fabric of social life and the dynamic of history'. These groups are offering help to any community that wants to run an 'Act as if Council'. There are seven planned already for early next year, all over Scotland – from Inverness to Dumfries. You could even start to 'act as if you own the place' yourself. Have a look: http://ourdemocracy.citizensassembly.co.uk/#section_three

Willie Sullivan is Director (Scotland) of the Electoral Reform Society

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'Viva Fidel' - without Castro, Cuba would not be 'libre'

Colin Fox looks at the achievements and legacy of Castro

The BBC's coverage of Fidel Castro's death was poor and predictable. It gave more coverage to his right-wing enemies in Miami wildly celebrating the news than to the 11m Cubans proudly commemorating his life. As is so often the case nowadays, it was left to Channel Four News to strike the right balance. It reminded viewers Castro was Mandela's hero. The ANC leader was shown speaking in Revolution Square in Havana in 1990 thanking the Cuban people for the support they had given the anti-apartheid struggle. Mandela the revolutionary had made Castro's Cuba his first port of call internationally after his release from jail.

In 1959, Castro and his small band of revolutionaries – Che Guevara and Raul Castro among them – toppled the brutal American-backed military dictator, Fulgencio Battista. US companies had owned everything, the sugar plantations and tobacco harvests, the zinc and copper mines, the banks, hotels and tourist industry. Millions of Cubans were pauperised, unemployed, living in 'bohios' or huts without electricity, water or sanitation. Half the children did not go to school. Racism was rife and so was the influence of the Mafia.

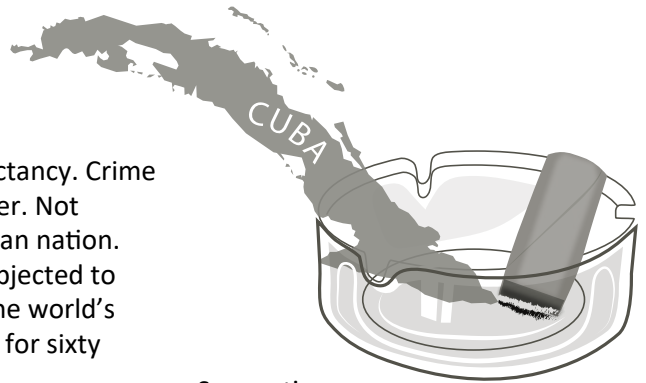
The revolution was popular but not with the Americans. They imposed an economic blockade, launched military attacks and plotted assassination attempts - 600 on Castro alone including exploding cigars. These have, until recently, been their hallmark response to Cuba's existence.

But the Cuban people refused to give in and have much to show for their defiance. The average Cuban enjoys a health service as good as the average American. The same can be said about education, infant

mortality and life expectancy. Crime is lower and racism rarer. Not bad for a small Caribbean nation. Remarkable for one subjected to constant threat from the world's most powerful country for sixty years.

For Cuba to have survived is a miracle. Salvador Allende's socialist regime in Chile did not survive US aggression. Neither did the socialist government in Grenada. Or Patrice Lumumba in the Congo or Mohamed Mossadeq in Iran. All were ousted by American imperialism. 'Viva Fidel' and 'Cuba libre' were chanted defiantly throughout the world upon news of Castro's passing. Those simple slogans signify so much including that socialist revolutions are not simple; that Cuba's has endured in the face of astonishing odds; and that liberating the oppressed was Castro's legacy in Cuba, Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa, Latin America and elsewhere. His enemies suggest his legacy was oppression and tyranny. Well they would, wouldn't they?

Cuba's existence taunts Washington still. This tiny island on America's is literally on its doorstep, with Key West being just 90 miles from Havana (and Miami being less than an hour by plane from Revolution Square). George Bush's infamous 'Axis of evil' speech in 2003 identified Cuba alongside Iran, Iraq and North Korea as America's greatest enemies. It was designed to terrify the Cuban people but they were used to such threats. They had after all survived the Bay of Pigs invasion, they had survived the economic blockade, they had survived the assassination attempts and they would survive the military threats of George Bush in the way Iraq did not.



Supporting the Cuban revolution and defending its many achievements earns socialists the right to criticise. Cuba did not get everything right. The country's political 'succession' for example has not been successful. The fact Raul Castro at 85 is President testifies to that. But those in the 'post -1959' generation identified as future leaders repeatedly fell short in displaying what was demanded of them. I recall Roberto Robaina, the Foreign Minister, being talked of as Castro's putative successor in 'Granma', the state newspaper, when I was in Havana in the 1990s. But he fell from favour after accusations of inappropriate foreign business relationships were levelled against him. The same fate befell Vice President, Carlos Lage Davilla, in 2009 after he argued for capitalist economic measures and Miguel Diaz-Canel in 2013. All were seen as potential successors to Fidel Castro.

The Cuban revolution is not alone in facing such challenges. Chris Hanu was seen as Mandela's successor from the next generation of ANC leaders. But he was assassinated by an ultra-right-wing white supremacist before stepping up to that role.

Many questions face the Cuban revolution in this 'post-Fidel' era. Uppermost among them perhaps is what difference will Donald Trump's election make to US/Cuba relations. It probably won't be good.

Colin Fox is the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) national spokesperson

What's left after Sanders, Clinton, and Trump?

Gerry Friedman surveys the wreckage and coming battles in the Disunited States of America

It should not be like this. After nominating a fringe candidate opposed to much of its own party's programme, one opposed by hundreds of the party's leading figures, the Republicans should be in disarray. On the left, the Democrats should be crowing and unified behind a sitting President who enjoys an unusually high approval rating. After a spirited contest, the Democrats nominated a candidate for President who was able to unify the Party around a platform that included progressive proposals on issues ranging from climate change to the minimum wage, and that candidate won a solid plurality in the popular vote, beating her Republican opponent by almost 3 million votes, or over 2% of the total.

So unpopular is the new president that his share of the popular vote (46.1%) barely beat the share received by the defeated Republican presidential candidate in 2008 (McCain received 45.7%) and he received a significantly smaller share of the vote than did losing candidates in every other election this century. The demographic prospects remain grim for the Republicans: their electoral prospects increasingly depend on overwhelming support from declining sections of the population in declining regions; the Democrats, on the other hand, and the almost-successful Sanders insurgency in particular, draw support from expanding parts of the electorate: educated, non-whites, in economically vibrant urban and coastal areas.

Democrats and the left have reason to be angry, energized, and optimistic. So far, however, their anger remains inchoate, without effective channel or institutional mechanism. Beginning with no organization, no name recognition, and virtually no support, Senator Sanders nearly upset the candidate favoured by virtually the entire

leadership of the Democrats. Having captured 13m votes, 43% of those cast in Democratic primaries, Sanders showed that many Democrats want their party to take a more progressive stance on issues ranging from social security and health care to education spending, foreign policy, and the regulation of financial markets.



Since Clinton lost states with a large white working-class vote like Wisconsin and Michigan (two states where Sanders won the primaries) as well as North Carolina, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, Sanders has even more credibility as a national leader for the Democratic Party. Many now argue that he has a programme that could recapture those voters who abandoned the Democrats because the party's neo-liberal leadership neglected the interests of what had been the party's working-class base. And Sanders's clout was further magnified by his ability to energize millennials, those aged 20-35 whose votes were an essential part of the Obama coalition and who did not turn out quite so heavily for Clinton.

Sanders was able to win significant concessions in the Party platform and, after the election, he was elevated to a leadership position in the Democratic Senate caucus. To be sure, his position, Director of Outreach, is minor, and he is but one of ten senators in the leadership. And his position as chief minority member of the Senate Budget Committee is only slightly more important; while it drafts

an overall budget, the Budget Committee has no substantive role in actual appropriations or revenue raising. The Sanders campaign did leave three legacies. In ascending order of importance, they are 'Our Revolution', the network of Sanders activists, and the Senator's own newfound media status.

The most visible product of the Sanders campaign has been 'Our Revolution', an activist group powered by left-over campaign funds and led by longtime Sanders associate, Jeffrey Weaver. While the organization has local affiliates, it is largely directed from the top. Sanders himself tapped Weaver to run the organization, and most of the Sanders staffers quit when Weaver was appointed director without consulting others. 'Our Revolution' may already be moribund. After supporting a variety of candidates and initiatives in the past election, in December 2016 it supported Representative Keith Ellison's bid to head the Democratic National Committee. While this could hardly be expected to excite a popular movement, it is more concerning that as of 18 December 2016, its website (<https://ourrevolution.com/>) has not been updated since the 8 November election.

Disappointed with 'Our Revolution', many young Sanders campaign staffers have maintained a national support network with many of the campaign's local supporters and national convention delegates. Without national leadership or a clear political program, their energy and local connections could be a valuable base for the next set of progressive campaigns, but by themselves cannot constitute an effective national movement.

Regardless of any institutional legacy, Sanders now has a voice in American national politics. With Clinton discredited, and Obama having failed to bring in his designated successor, Sanders

is the leading national Democrat standing. His response to every Trump proposal or appointment is front-page news, on the networks, and across Twitter. If Sanders is not the face of the Democratic Party, he is seen by the public and the press as a leading figure within it.

National Democrats did not expect to lose this election, and they have responded to defeat with some mixture of denial (facilitated because Clinton won the popular vote), anger, and, most of all, a deep depression. Their confidence may have contributed to their defeat. The Obama Administration did not do more about the Russian interference in the election because they were confident that Clinton would win regardless and feared to act and rock the boat.

Combined with the Democrats' failure to capture the Senate, defeat in the Presidential election means that the Democrats are shut out of power in Washington as well as in most state capitals. In addition to anticipating the destruction of many of the programs that Democrats have sponsored or protected for decades, many national policy activists are now looking for work with few prospects of employment in the Federal government or in liberal think tanks which expect to lose their accustomed Federal grants.

More than loss of position depresses Democrats. Defeat has exposed the narrow and unstable base of support behind the national party. With its support for neo-liberal economic policies, the national party has an agenda attractive to Wall Street and export-oriented American industry (ranging from entertainment and high technology companies to business and financial services, and higher education). While politicians like the Clintons and Obamas have successfully raised campaign funds from these sources, many capitalists in these industries naturally prefer low-tax and anti-government Republicans. Even in defeat, Sanders demonstrated that neo-liberals depend on an electorate considerably more progressive, more suspicious of trade deals, more concerned about global warming, and more hostile to Wall

Street. Republican attacks helped Obama to hold together this volatile alliance; it did not explode under Clinton but it shed just enough votes to elect Trump, and to expose to national Democrats how precarious their coalition has become.

Top-down efforts will be vital to slow the enactment of the Trump agenda but neither Sanders nor national Democrats have the political strength or the programme to stop America's slide towards fascism. Fortunately, there are popular movements building, movements that contributed to the successes of the Sanders campaign and have only been invigorated by Trump. Some of these include:

Climate Action: The Climate Action Network, 350.org and moms clean air force.org are examples of decentralised groups that have attracted a large and militant membership to protect the planet. The fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline, which united progressive groups around the country with Native American communities and veteran's groups, is an example of the type of spontaneous local action that can help to stop the Trump climate agenda. There is also some support among the Democratic establishment and business interest for protecting the climate.

Economic justice: The Fight for \$15 has become a national movement for higher wages and fair treatment of fast food and other low wage workers. Without ties to Democratic politicians, it has grown to involve, in its words: '1,000s of workers. 100s of cities. 1 movement. \$15 and a union' (<http://fightfor15.org/>). It is now leading popular organizing against '[n]ewly-elected politicians and newly empowered corporate special interests ... pushing an extremist agenda to move the country to the right'. An immediate target is Trump's nominee to head the Department of Labor, Andy Puzder, head of a fast-food chain and opponent of the minimum wage and labor unions.

Civil rights, African-Americans, Immigrants, Women and LGBTQ: Attacks on abortion rights, voting rights, massive deportations of undocumented immigrants, attacks on gays and Muslims are

all on the agenda for the new Administration. While these attacks may be met with pushback from establishment sources, including several state attorney's general, we might expect popular action in defense of established rights. There have already been active campaigns to establish 'sanctuary' zones to protect immigrants and for local action to protect access to reproductive health care and to resist police brutality. The model here, of course, is the Black Lives Matter movement.

The rise of popular resistance movements gives hope that the body of American democracy will resist the Trump infection. On a less optimistic note, however, are the continued fragmentation of the American left, and the lack of a coordinated national campaign and ideology to fight the right. Going back to the 1970s, Republicans have built a movement seeking to reverse economic reforms and civil liberties expansions dating back to the New Deal of the 1930s.

Despite huge investments in thinktanks and grassroots movements, the right has enjoyed only limited success, advancing elements of a neo-liberal economic programme but doing little beyond. Now, behind Trump, reactionaries stand poised, if not 'to make America great', at least 'to make America like 1925 again'. Those of us opposed to this reactionary programme have the support of a solid majority of Americans, including many who, ironically, voted for the right-wing Trump in frustration at the Democrat's neo-liberalism. What we need is a social movement and a programme to win back voters disenchanted with the Democrat's dalliance with neoliberalism. We need a movement and a programme to point the way forward to a progressive, inclusive, and democratic America. Without that, it will be a long and dark time.

Gerry Friedman is Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He is the author of Reigniting the Labor Movement: Restoring means to ends in a democratic labor movement (Routledge, 2007) and was active in Sander's campaign.

Music lessons for the movement?

Martin Cloonan and John Williamson say the MU has faced conditions that other unions now do

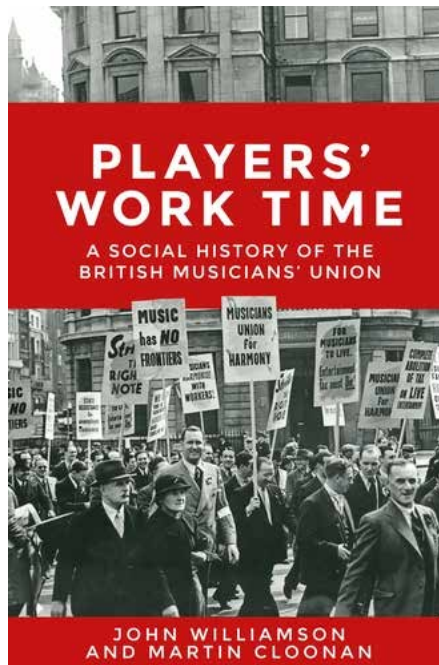
What lessons can be learned from studying the working lives of musicians? This question lay at the heart of the research which underpinned our recent book, *Players' Work Time: A History of the British Musicians' Union*. We attempted to use the Musicians' Union (MU) as a prism through which to examine musicians' working lives, the industries they work in and broader patterns in Britain's musical life from the founding of the Union as the Amalgamated Musicians' Union (AMU) in 1893.

Underpinning our study was the premise that musicians are best considered as workers. Within this journal our approach might seem logical enough, but it is one which had previously only rarely been adopted. Prior to our research, existing studies had seen musicians readily considered as artists, creators, entertainers and much else, but rarely simply as workers. However our contention was that understanding those who make music as workers can give us fresh insights in to both music making and processes of industrial capitalism.

Thinking of musicians as primarily being workers soon led us to consideration of *where* such people work. Here it is salutary to remind ourselves that music is present at all the major moments in people's lives. Not without reason was a band called *Weddings Parties Anything*. Musicians perform at an incredibly diverse range of social occasions from christenings through to weddings and funerals and in entertainment places such as pubs, clubs, theatres, cruise ships, holiday camps, music venues and arenas. They also undertake a range of other activities such as recording, appearing on radio and television and teaching. Some compose as well. Some specialise in one genre, others work across many. All these activities attract differing rates of remuneration from nothing (far too many to mention) to millions (including headline shows at stadiums, but also private shows for

the fabulously wealthy).

Understanding such patterns of work leads inexorably to the conclusion that musicians are *particular types of worker* seeking to work in the ever changing music industries. Importantly, this generally involves seeking *work* rather than seeking *employment* in the form of jobs. The dominant mode of employment in music is that of self-employment and currently only around 5-10% of the MU's 30,000 or so members has a full time, salaried, position - primarily within the UK's orchestras.



The rest are overwhelmingly freelancers. Consequently, in many ways, the MU is better conceived of as a federation of small businesses rather than a traditional union. It negotiates terms and conditions for only a small part of its membership, albeit one which is vital to the union's psychology and its determination to - in the words of its longest running campaign - 'Keep Music Live'.

Today, its orientation is as a service-focused organisation with members more likely to join because of the benefits it offers (such as cheap personal and instrument insurance and free legal advice) than they do in order to take part in the class struggle. The modern MU sees itself as *part* of the music industry

and campaigns alongside major employers (and/or sub-contractors) of musicians at least as often as it takes such employers on.

To note this is not to decry a Union which has throughout its history sought to organise *all* professional musicians including those semi-professionals, who form a considerable bulk of its membership. In doing this the Union has had to counter those who believe that at least some musicians are better served by a professional association than they are a union. Today, the MU remains clearly a union, if a unique and sometimes idiosyncratic one.

Our history of the MU spans 120 years and as we struggled to do this history justice in a book, so we cannot even scrape the surface here. But, cutting a very long story short, three key areas emerge as particularly important.

The first is changing technology. In the late 1920s and early 1930s MU membership fell from around 20,000 to under 7,000 and the Union almost went bankrupt. The reason was a new form of technology in the form of the 'talkies' - films with soundtracks. Prior to the introduction of the first 'talkie', 'The Jazz Singer' in 1928 (1927 in the US), 'silent' cinema had generally been accompanied by cinema orchestras, most of whom were made redundant almost overnight by this new technology. The Union's unsuccessful attempt to battle the 'talkies' was its first major interaction with modern technology which might replace live musicians.

It would not be its last as technologies such as recording, radio, television, synthesizers, drum machines emerged and carried with them the threat of displacing live musicians. However, the MU's defeat in the battle against the 'talkies' led to it adopting a somewhat circumspect attitude to subsequent technological developments. Often wrongly accused of trying to 'ban' the latest technological innovation, our history

suggests that the MU generally adopted a more nuanced approach, seeking to either use it to *increase* employment or to militate against any displacement.

Another key area throughout the Union's history concerned its relations with the music industries. Key here was relationships with two organisations, the BBC and Phonographic Performance Limited (PPL) - the collecting society for performers whose recordings are being used in public places such as broadcasting and shops, cinemas etc.

The BBC is the biggest employer of musicians in human history and the MU has continually sought to impress upon the organisation that, as a public body, it has a duty to the music profession. PPL was formed in 1934 and is owned by the major record companies, another key employer/sub-contractor of musicians. Its relationship with the MU is complex, but for many years it resulted in the MU being able to insist that the licences which PPL issued to broadcasters allowing them to play recordings in which PPL held copyright included clauses which limited the amount of such recordings which could be played. These so-called 'needletime' agreements underpinned industrial relations in the recording industry for over fifty years. The premise here was that use of recorded music would result in less employment for live musicians, something which was accepted by all the interested parties for a number of years.

These restrictions on the amount of music which could be played under the 'needletime' agreements were deemed to be a 'restraint of trade' by a Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1988 and were subsequently abandoned. This move formed part of a broader attempt by those in charge of commercial radio (which began in 1973) to resist any restrictions on the amount of recorded music which could be played on the radio - and on any requirement to employ musicians. While 'needletime' was highly controversial, few would argue that live musicians' employment opportunities or their terms and conditions of such employment

opportunities across UK radio have improved since its demise.

The third key area to consider in the MU's history was competition in the UK's notoriously volatile music market. Here supply of labour has generally exceeded demand, resulting in a downward pressure on the price of musicians' labour. Over the years, the MU's concern about competition within this market has included bemoaning military and police bands that were deemed not only to be providing competition for civilian musicians, but also getting state support to do so via the provision of free instruments and uniforms.

However, the most controversial areas have concerned the MU's attitude towards foreign musicians seeking to work in the UK, generally via touring or playing residencies. For many years, it adopted a protectionist stance and tried to prevent foreign musicians from touring, often on the (spurious) grounds that anything a foreign musician could do, so, given time, so could his - and we do mean *his* - British counterpart.

This approach of 'British jobs for British workers' reached its apex between 1935 and 1954 when, bowing to longstanding MU pressure, the Ministry of Labour agreed that it would not issue work permits for touring 'alien' without the MU's consent, which was very rarely forthcoming. At this point, the union's main concern was visits by US jazz musicians, the majority of whom were, of course, black. When this system was abandoned in 1955, it was replaced by a system of 'reciprocal exchange' of musicians across the Atlantic based on 'man hours'. This system lasted until the late 1980s when, alongside many measures to protect workers, it was swept aside by Thatcherism.

The fact during the 'ban' that the union appeared to target US jazz musicians for exclusion from working in Britain and that the majority of such people were black while the Union's membership was overwhelmingly white understandably led to accusations of racism. Certainly xenophobic sentiment was not hard to find

during this period (any more than it was in wider British society). The ironies of people expressing xenophobic sentiments while earning living from performing music generally composed or originating from outside Britain are obvious enough. It resulted in something of a schizophrenic approach. The MU passed a motion against racial discrimination at its 1947 conference and in 1958 took a landmark case against the La Scala club in Wolverhampton which was operating a colour bar. It successfully got its members to boycott the club and in 1957 had become the first union to bar its members from appearing in the apartheid South Africa. Here it was at the forefront of British trade unionism.

Attempting to understand and even explain all this took us a considerable time. Our history is unreservedly revisionist in the sense that histories of both the British music industries and trade unionism had previously either totally ignored or - at best - marginalised the MU. However, this organisation has been at the heart of all the major industrial struggles and agreements in the UK's music industries for over 120 years. Our strong belief is that if you want to understand how the music is played, then you need to understand both the working conditions of those who play it - and the union which has attempted to represent them. So, take a look at the *work* of those who *play*.

Martin Cloonan is Professor of Popular Music Politics at the University of Glasgow where his research focuses on the political economy of the music industries. John Williamson is Lord Kelvin Adam Smith Fellow in Popular Music Studies at the University of Glasgow and is currently researching the history of music on Scottish television.

Players' Work Time is published by Manchester University Press. An exhibition to accompany the book, *Keeping Music Live*, is running at the People's History Museum, Manchester, from 22 November to 5 February 2017. For more see www.muhistory.com

Progressive power of poetry

Mike Quille explains what the Culture Matter initiative is about

***I shall not cease from mental fight
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England's green and pleasant land***

These words by William Blake – which, of course, we interpret to apply not only to Britain, but the whole world – inspired the website and publishing collective called *Culture Matters*. In this article, I'll say something about our general thinking, and about the three poetry booklets we've just published. The arts and culture – by which we mean a wide range of activities, including sport, religion, eating and drinking etc – are vital parts of human life. They develop our intellectual, emotional and spiritual faculties, and provide meaning, pleasure, inspiration and enrichment to our lives.

A capitalist market economy creates enormous potential for cultural creation and enjoyment. But at the same time the drive for profit, the unequal and exploitative property relationships, and the resulting ideological drive to generate a culture of acceptance and legitimisation of capitalism, necessarily shapes and constrains the quality of cultural creation and consumption.

At the same time, the arts and cultural activities can resist, oppose and overcome constraint, alienation and oppression. They can promote awareness, arouse indignation, and envision alternatives. This is how we interpret Blake's 'mental fight' to build a New Jerusalem, as a cultural struggle to transcend and replace capitalism with a better society. It's a struggle involving sports clubs, churches, supermarkets and pubs, as well as art galleries, concerts and poetry readings.

Culture Matters is a platform for creative and critical contributions

to the cultural struggle. It's about a year old, and we have had a great response, from writers, academics, and artists. Four writers and artists who responded particularly wholeheartedly were Kevin Higgins, Bob Starrett, David Betteridge, and Fred Voss.

Fred Voss is an American metalworker and this year's winner of the Joe Hill Labor Poetry Award. His *The Earth and the Stars in the Palm of Our Hand* is about the dire situation of the American working class, whose health, wealth and happiness are being eroded by the massive deindustrialisation and globalisation which is directed by corporate and political elites. Voss has said this: 'I want to change the world: I want to strike the spark or kick the pebble that will start the fire or the avalanche that will change the world a little'.

His poetry combines the precision and realism born of years of working on the shop floor, with a wide-ranging, Whitmanesque lyrical imagination. Len McCluskey, Unite general secretary, provided the Foreword, and bought several hundred copies for his members. He said: 'Fred Voss is like a prophet. He is warning us of the consequences of the way we live, and inspiring us with a positive vision of a possible – and desirable – socialist future.'

Kevin Higgins writes political poetry of the highest order, telling truth to power with Swiftian savagery and satirical humour, dissecting and denouncing political doublespeak, pretension and hypocrisy. *The Minister for Poetry Has Decreed* is written in a wickedly simple and hilariously entertaining style, but artistically deploys a profoundly moral sense of justice and truth to expose lies, evasions, greed and sheer stupidity.

Finally, David Betteridge's poems are lyrical, learned and leftist, infused with a sense of history, class struggle, and compassion for the suffering of working people. *Slave Songs and Symphonies* is a beautifully crafted collection of poems, images and epigraphs, about politics, progressive art and music, social justice and peace. One of them is featured in the next article in this edition.

Like the Voss collection, they are inspired by visionary hope, and a strong belief that our class-divided society and culture can be transformed by radical politics and good art – and by radical art and good politics. The subtly expressed political message of the poems is complemented by the skilful draughtsmanship of Bob Starrett, the official cartoonist of the UCS work-in of 1971-1972. David commented: 'Bob and I share a liking for strong outlines, both in words and images. We also share a commitment to radical politics, as well as cultural struggle, like the presiding genius of *Culture Matters*, William Blake. The booklet combines our own collaborative work with that of all those others who inspire us, the famous and the unfamous, from olden times to the here and now'.

All three booklets are superb examples of the kind of politically progressive, inspiring art which we have published to contribute to building a new Jerusalem: a fairer, more equal, socialist and democratic society.

The booklets are £5.99 each or £15 for all three and are available from manifestopress.org.uk

*Mike Quille is a writer and arts editor, and founder and co-editor of *Culture Matters*,*

www.culturematters.org.uk

CULTURE  **MATTERS**

Poets' progressive page

Following the Jimmy Reid annual lecture by Jeremy Corbyn MP in October last year, we publish two poems about Jimmy Reid.

Where have all the shipyards gone?

Gilbert Alomenu

Where have all the shipyards gone?
The battles which the unions won
The graving docks, rich barons
And the dreams along the way?
What happened to the ships we knew
The Queen Mary, The QE2
The Yarrow Yard in Scotstoun
Fairfields down Govan way?
The days are short, the nights are long,
Where have all the shipyards gone?

Where have all the apprentices gone
Billy Connolly, Alex Ferguson
The famous names who played their part
And the skills along the way?
What happened to the jobs they knew
Welders, steelplaters, loftsmen who
Understood that trade would be
Passed down father to son?
Work was brutal, hostile, cold
Offset by the great camaraderie of old

Where have all the memories gone?
The UCS Consortium
Ted Heath v Red Clydeside
And the schemes along the way?
What of the tales of times gone past
Hope for the future which didn't last
The Jimmies Reid and Airlie
The work-in without pay?
The times were hard, the battle long
Where have all the contracts gone?

Gilbert wrote the poem especially for 2016's Govan Fair Brochure and read it out at the Govan Fair.

Dedication to Mr Jimmy Reid

Adil Bhatti

You were so sweet and bright
Fought always for the people's right
You were full ideas and thought
So determined that you could never be bought
Uncompromising, what a brave heart
You are a real Scottish lion heart
I tried to compare you with others
Couldn't find any of the Scots' mothers
The role you played, the race you have run
Always will be remembered by everyone

As mentioned in Mike Quille's article on Culture Matters, here is an example of one of David Betteridge's poems:

Giving Back Riches

David Betteridge

In praise of Paul Robeson (1898 -1976)
'But I keep laffin/Instead of cryin/
I must keep fightin/Until I'm dying ... '
Paul Robeson after Oscar Hammerstein II

Experience showed him a world divided
In his song he held it whole
Carrying a deep wound, his and the world's
Dreaming a generous dream
Following the rainbow and the dove
He was a giant, serving the people
Few neared the strength of his standing
In their many tongues, he spoke for the poor
Giving back riches
He was Clyde and Volga,
Mississippi, Ganges, Amazon and Nile
He was Vesuvius
Against wrong, with his life, all his life
He waged war; he was unbeaten
He is remembered in Glasgow
His echo lingers, loud
For those with souls to hear
He sings the world sane





The Jimmy Reid
Foundation

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PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM IN SCOTLAND

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- * New Approaches to Public Service Reform

**Available online at www.reidfoundation.org
from early January, print copies by mid-January**

The Paper will be launched at a seminar on Friday 20 January,
Lecture Theatre 2, Appleton Tower, University of Edinburgh, 11 Crichton Street, EH8 9LE
<http://www.ed.ac.uk/maps/maps?building=appleton-tower>
10.30am-12.30pm, registration tea/coffee 10.00/30

Chairperson: Professor James Mitchell; Speaker: Dave Watson : Questions and discussion
Attendance free, register online at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/public-service-reform-in-scotland-launch-of-new-policy-paper-by-dave-watson-tickets-30926610324>

The Foundation gratefully acknowledge the support given by the University Academy of
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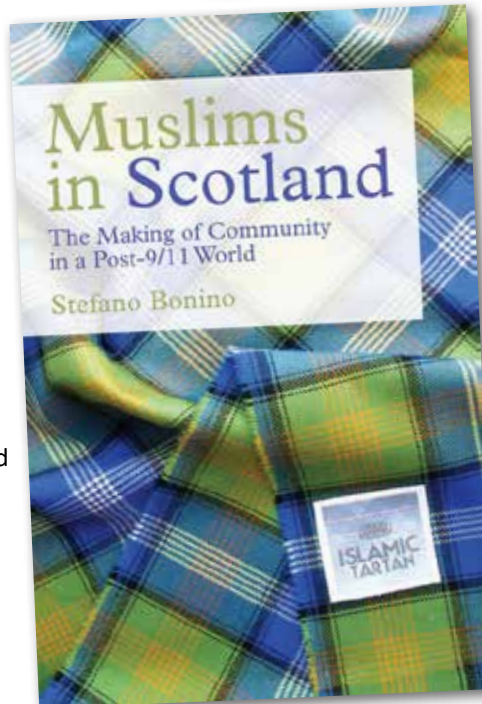
Stefano Bonino, Muslims in Scotland: The Making of Community in a Post- 9/11 World,

Edinburgh University Press, £19.99,
9781474408028

Reviewed by Robin Jones

A recent Ipsos-Mori poll revealed the disparity between public perception and reality regarding the Muslim population in Europe. French respondents were the most likely to overestimate – the average respondent thought that 31% of the French population was Muslim. In reality, the figure is around 7.5%. British respondents also inflated their estimates, putting the Muslim population of Britain at 15% – more than three times the true figure of 4.8%. This tendency was further exaggerated when respondents were asked to project their estimates into the future. Brits predicted that 22% of the population would be Muslim by 2020; research from the Pew Research Centre suggests the figure will be 6.1%.

Bobby Duffy, the Managing Director for Ipsos Mori Social Research Institute, London, stated that the reasons for these errors were various and ranged through respondents' struggles with simple maths, to media coverage of issues, to social psychology. Whatever the reason, it is an error that the far right has been working hard to manipulate with campaigns of deliberate disinformation and fear mongering. The left has a responsibility to counter that disinformation. *Muslims in Scotland: the Making of Community in a Post-9/11 World*, by Stefano Bonino is a valuable – and, sadly, rather rare – resource for those undertaking that task.



Though '[i]n Great Britain,' writes Bonino, 'scholars have produced outstanding analyses of Muslim communities living in England ... The absence of a scholarly book on Muslims *qua* Muslims in Scotland constitutes a significant gap in the growing body of academic literature'. The main aims of this book, he states, 'are to address this omission and to provide an updated account of the meanings attached to being a Muslim in contemporary Scotland'. These are high targets.

Almost 60% of Muslims living in Scotland are of Pakistani origin or heritage, the remainder were categorised in the 2011 census as 'Arab' (9.8), 'African' (6.2), 'Other Asian' (6.1), 'Bangladeshi' (4), 'Other White' (3.3), 'White Scottish' (3.3), 'Indian' (2.5), 'Other Ethnicity' (2.2) and 'Mixed or Multiple Ethnicity' (1.7.) Attaching meaning to such a broad grouping is a challenge and, indeed, a risk, though it is one that Bonino acknowledges from the outset: '(t)he diversity of the Muslim community in

Great Britain, and across most European countries, makes it difficult to construct a single 'Muslim community' without incurring the risk of homogenising the experience of individuals who differ along ethnic, theological, gender and age lines'. Though a degree of such homogenisation is an inevitable consequence of the book's declared aims, Bonino does well to challenge it as frequently as those aims allow.

The overall tone of the book is optimistic: for Scottish Muslims, he argues, '[t]he final balance speaks of relatively positive experiences of sharing a non-Muslim country with the largely white Scottish majority'. Edinburgh 'with its cosmopolitan nature, economic and political power, geographically dispersed and integrated minorities, tolerant social attitudes and engagement with diversity' is singled out for praise and is described as exemplifying 'a post-ethnic, transcultural society.'

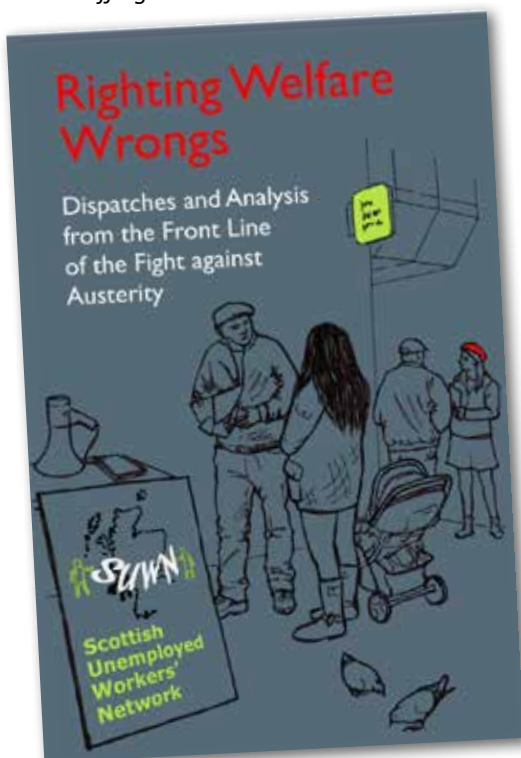
Bonino is not suggesting that Scotland is a prejudice-free paradise of integration. Success stories, he argues, 'should not overshadow historical problems of ethno-religious discrimination. Prejudice against migrant labour and Scotland's active involvement in the British Empire – a major theme in Scottish historiography in recent times – are just two key examples'. His chapters on discrimination are sobering and remind readers not only of how far Scotland has come, but also the distance it still has to travel.

Though primarily an academic work, there is much here for the more general reader: the chapter on historical 'migration, settlement and development,' for example, provides a brief and effective summary of immigration to Scotland during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Drawing on the work of Tom Devine, Bonino is successful in highlighting the different

ways in which immigrant communities were established in Scotland and how these differences contributed to discrimination, especially in regard to labour market pressures.

The book is not without flaws – owing to the breadth of his subject Bonino has (understandably) spread himself quite thinly and there were occasional ambiguities in terminology that this reader found distracting (though it should be noted that the copy being reviewed was an uncorrected advance proof). Despite this, *Muslims in Scotland* is an essential contribution to a discussion that demands just the sort of extended research and consideration that Bonino affords it. This is the level at which we must hope the discussion continues.

Robin Jones lives in Paris where he works as an English teacher. His fiction, articles and reviews have appeared in the Edinburgh Review, Gutter, Jacobin, the Dark Mountain Project and Huffington Post.



Scottish Unemployed Workers Network, Righting Welfare Wrongs

– dispatches and analysis from the front line of the fight against austerity, Common Print, £10.00.

Reviewed by Stephen Smellie

When I spent time on the dole in the 1970s and 1980s, we had to sign on at the bureau every two weeks. The queues were large and you met your friends there. We would occasionally visit the Job Centre to see if there were any jobs to apply for. We would advise each other on what you needed to do and what you could claim for. There were unemployed workers centres where you could get advice; sometimes access some training or just hang about with your mates for a while. Whilst queuing to sign on you could buy the Militant newspaper from the guy who was also there to sign on and have a political discussion, or wind him up if that was your mood. It was a kind of collective experience. We knew we were unemployed because there were no jobs and it was the government's fault.

This book written by activists in SUWN describes a very different experience where unemployed people are isolated and put through a series of processes designed to humiliate and make people believe that it is their fault that they are not in work.

The mainly Dundee activists responsible for the stories and facts within this book have campaigned against the modern day benefit system that seeks to force people into zero-hour minimum wage jobs; which forces people to take part in bogus training and job experience placements for no money; that puts crushing pressure on people who are ill so that they come off the register and so live on the lowest form of benefit or no benefit at all; and threatens and bullies people with sanctions, i.e., stopping all financial support, for failing to comply with rules, appointments that they either are not advised of or are minutes late for.

Based on stories heard and lessons gained from standing at stalls outside the Dundee bureau talking to the victims of this system, this book is a record of our times. These are harsh times and the victims are made to feel that they are the problem. To stand with these people, to support them in meetings with the employees of the system, be threatened by the 'security' and the law for doing so takes character, determination and a political understanding that changing the system takes people to stand against it.

The book is partly made up of postings on the SUWN Facebook page where

over a period of several months reports of the encounters with the system are recorded. Human stories are told of misery and resilience. Political ideas are presented and practical advice on how to cope with the system is dispensed. After a while, you realise you are reading a handbook on the system as well as a call to arms.

Other sections of the book are essays on aspects of the history and theories of the welfare state. These sections are informative but is the details of, on one hand, the struggle to survive in twenty first century Scotland without a decent job and, on the other, the struggle to build a resistance to the brutality of the system that doesn't care for the individual.

Throughout the book unpleasant experiences are described with staff in the bureau or in the 'training' agencies or in the medical assessment companies who behave in a brutal and uncaring way towards claimants. Some of these claimants have severe health problems, mental health conditions and significant needs and yet all are treated like scum. The book doesn't dwell on this but the resistance that SUWN are seeking to inspire amongst the unemployed needs to be matched by a resistance within the system amongst workers whose circumstances are not that far removed from the people they are supposed to be serving. An excellent read; an excellent guide to a brutal system; and an excellent call to arms.

Stephen Smellie is the branch secretary of UNISON South Lanarkshire

Righting Welfare Wrongs is also available as a free e-book at https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxdJUjRvYfh_MlhicHIUR0c3YIU/view

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Kick up the Tabloids

As we enter 2017, I can never remember a year where I have felt less optimistic about the future. And, although we may be embarking on a year which will culminate in October with the centenary of the Russian Revolution, I cannot recall a more depressing year from a leftist point of view than 2016.

I am writing this just before Christmas, that annual festival of booze-fuelled consumerism that seems to be have been going on for the last six weeks. The reason it seems to have been going on for the last six weeks is that it has been going on the for the past six weeks. Christmas pretty much appears to start as soon as Hallowe'en finishes, stretched out even further by the festival of capitalism that is Black Friday.

And on this year's Black Friday, in a hugely poignantly ironic coincidence, Fidel Castro died. Most people did not notice at the time, as they were far too busy fighting one another in Curry's to get the last cheap TV in the shop.

Castro's greatest achievement, aside from the Cuban Revolution, was to live to be as old as ninety, given that the CIA spent the best part of fifty years hatching up bizarre assassination plots, including exploding cigars and booby-trapped clam shells which would blow up when he went scuba-diving. Proof that crazy, deranged right-wing thinking in the USA had existed long before the emergence of Donald Trump.

Castro was, of course, only one of the high-profile deaths of 2016. It was a year in which we also lost David Bowie, Mohammed Ali, Prince, Victoria Wood, Johann Cruyff, Alan Rickman, Terry Wogan

and Ronnie Corbett. And let's not forget the actor who played R2D2, former weathrman Iain McAskill and the bloke who invented the Heimlich Manoeuvre. However, from my point of view, the real tragedy of 2016 was not the people who died but rather it was the people who didn't die that made it such a grim year.

It is almost as if politics in the West has entered some kind of world where we are governed by evil cartoons. With the UK governed by an unelected Cruella de Ville who has put foreign affairs in the hands of Billy Bunter's half-witted cousin and with events in the USA resembling some dystopian episode of family guy where Peter Griffin somehow is elected President. Add to this, the presence of a Bond villain in the Kremlin, and it really is difficult to feel at all optimistic about the coming year.

Our Prime Minster may or may not have an idea of where Britain's future and the World may lie in the future. However, with Trump and Putin already embarking on nuclear escalation, the very future of Europe itself may be very unclear in 2017. There may be no Europe for the UK to have a future relationship with.

Looking back on 2016, it is difficult to recall a more bizarre set of events unfolding. It was as if Leicester City winning the English Premier League had somehow put the karma of the entire planet into reverse gear. Put quite simply, the wrong sort of shit seemed to keep hitting the fan.

In the wake of the Brexit result and the election of Trump, I was beginning to lose all confidence in people's ability to vote in a sensible manner. Thank goodness, Andy Murray won BBC Sports Personality of the Year. That went some way

towards restoring my faith in democracy. The way people had been voting in 2016, I would not have been at all surprised if Ched Evans had won that award.

However, it is important not to view the future too bleakly. It is vital to look ahead with a degree of optimism, and a recall of past dark times that we have somehow managed to live through. Because, let's face it, many of us of a certain age have been here before. I personally remember the utter despair that was felt when Margaret Thatcher was elected, despair that was only matched by the total devastation that was felt when she was re-elected twice afterwards. I remember the disbelief that met the election of Ronald Regan to the White House. At the time we thought it utterly incomprehensible that the USA would vote for an intellectually-challenged former B-movie actor as its Commander-in-Chief. In comparison to this year's result, it actually now appears a comparatively wise choice.

I also remember the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and as a small child, have vague memories of the World holding its breath to see who blinked first as the USA and Soviet Union went head-to-head in the Cuban Missile Crisis. I guess the message I am trying to send to younger readers is this. I am getting really old, so 2017 may mark the last year in which this bi-monthly column of vaguely comic rambling makes even the remotest sense. Happy 2017!

Vladimir McTavish will be appearing at Monkey Barrel Comedy, Edinburgh on Friday 20 & Saturday 21 January 2017, at The Stand Comedy in Glasgow on Wednesday 25 January and at The Stand Comedy Club in Edinburgh from Thursday 26 to Sunday 29 January.



Scottish Rank & File

Unity is Power



The Rank & File was born out of an attack on the skills of electricians in 2011 by eight of the major mechanical and electrical construction companies in the UK. We have also been in the forefront in the fight against blacklisting with our partners, the Blacklist Support Group. We seek the adherence of collective agreements on all construction sites and recognition of all elected shop stewards and safety reps. The Rank & File, who is made up mostly of Unite members but also count members of GMB and Ucat among our ranks, are determined to change the face of construction for the benefit of working people by transforming the attitudes of companies in the industry to realise the benefits of having an organised workforce. To do this we need the assistance of clients such as the Scottish government, local authorities, NHS and Scotland's Universities and Colleges through their procurement processes, in line with the Scottish government's Fair Work Framework.

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Demand fair funding for Scotland's councils

We all rely on the services delivered by local government. From childcare to care for our elderly and vulnerable; keeping our streets lit to emptying our bins; helping us to stay fit and our children to learn - local government is at the heart of Scottish society. So it is vital we ensure councils are properly resourced and capable of meeting the demands placed upon them.

This year alone has seen 7,000 jobs lost across local government and further cuts to services will have a devastating effect on our communities and the economy. These cuts are unsustainable and UNISON is calling for councils to receive fair funding to deliver the services the people of Scotland rely on.

www.unison-scotland.org

7000 LOCAL GOVERNMENT JOBS LOST THIS YEAR ALONE

£186m



2010/2011 2015/2016

real terms cut in Scottish Government funding for councils

8.4%

real terms cut for councils

2010/11

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